DANCING IN THE TENSION BETWEEN THE GLOBAL AND NATIONAL: SEEING CHINESE TELEVISION INDUSTRY THROUGH PHOENIX SATELLITE TV

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ABSTRACT

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Phoenix Satellite Television is a TV network broadcasting to the global Chinese-speaking community, primarily to the mainland of China. This study examines Phoenix as a lens by which to consider the overall Chinese television industry in the era of globalization.

Utilizing the theory of media imperialism, this study investigates the program content, format, scheduling pattern, and advertisement use of Phoenix, and finds that US-inspired neo-liberalism is expressed in the network’s programming strategies. The study also examines two leading TV networks in China – China Central Television, and Hunan Satellite Television – to compare their programming strategies with those of Phoenix. Although the results of this comparative analysis indicate that the three networks adopt different strategies, they also reveal hidden similarities. That is, all three networks, along with other TV networks at various levels in China, have embraced the ideology of neo-liberalism by emphasizing profit-making as their core goals. The analysis also reveals that the Chinese government still holds a tight control over the media in China. Ironically, this control has helped spread the very neo-liberalism the Chinese government’s control attempts to hinder.

The implication of this study to the thesis of Media Imperialisms is that the findings suggest that the central question of imperialism and its relationship to media has to do with the ways in which media content and media format relate to, support or fail to support, the trajectory of imperialism in any of its manifestations.
DEDICATION

To my parents, 谢志明 Xie Zhiming and 周同芬 Zhou Tongfen

and

To my deceased grandmother 罗仲玉 Luo Zhongyu

for raising me up with unconditional love.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EVOLUTION OF MEDIA IN CHINA, RISE OF TV AND PHOENIX</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Context: Media Liberalization and Neo-Liberalism</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evolution of Media and Television in China</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rise of TV in China</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix Satellite TV and Phoenix Television Corporation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>THEORETICAL EVOLUTION IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA STUDIES</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMPERIALISM THESIS, GLOBALIZATION, AND HYBRIDITY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political Economy Approach</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperialism Thesis</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybridity: Cultural Impacts of Globalization</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PROGRAMS OF PHOENIX</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News Programs of Phoenix</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-news Programs</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5  SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE OR SIMILARITY IN DIFFERENCE

PHOENIX, HUNAN SATELLITE TV, AND CCTV…………………………...102

Phoenix Satellite TV and China Central Television (CCTV)…………………………...102

Phoenix Satellite TV and Hunan Satellite TV……………………………………...113

The Advertisements of Phoenix, CCTV, and Hunan Satellite TV………………...119

Concluding Remarks………………………………………………………………122

CHAPTER 6  CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION……………………………...124

Conclusion……………………………………………………………………….124

Discussion……………………………………………………………………...127

Suggestions for Future Research………………………………………………..139

REFERENCES…………………………………………………………………….142
# LIST OF TABLES/PICTURES

## Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The Development of the Media in China</td>
<td>11–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Phoenix Major Programs</td>
<td>80–81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Comparison of Programming Strategies of Phoenix, CCTV, and Hunan TV</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Pictures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The Logo of Phoenix</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>A Date with Luyu</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Oprah Winfrey Show</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>CCTV Network News</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>A Happy Heart: Tell Me Your Story</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Beat the Mic</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This study is focused on television, which continues to be the most powerful medium (Thussu, 2007a) and the main source for news and entertainment for most people in the world (Straubhaar, 2007). We are living in an era of new media; however, that does not mean that “old” media are dead. Newspapers, radio, films, and television are still supplying information and entertainment for people around the world. Television remains the pivotal element in people’s consumption of cultural industries, and cultural industries are still central in our daily lives because they create the media texts that have impact on our understanding of the world (Hesmondalgh, 2007). Thus, television, although supplemented more and more by other media, especially by new media, still constitutes “a dominant layer of media experience” (Straubhaar, 2007, p.2) for most people. Moreover, Parks and Kumar (2003) state that the recent trend of television globalization reveals a vast array of political, economic, cultural, and technological transformations around the world. Straubhaar points out similarly that given the rapid extension of economic and technological changes, “television in our world is an increasingly complex system with global, transnational, translocal, national, regional, metropolitan, and local spaces, dynamics, players, and flows” (p. 1).

Changes have taken place not only in the Western media capitals of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan, but also in Brazil, China, and India, and these changes can only be understood through the close examination of television industries, programs, technologies, audiences, and cultural contexts (Parks and Kumar, 2003). Therefore, as researchers recognize the dominant players based in the West, it is also important to look at globalization of television from other perspectives. Rai and Cottle (2007) suggest that research of satellite news channels
should go beyond the “global paradigm” which tended to focus on CNNI and BBC World. In the field of 24/7 satellite news provision in the world, “there is a regional, transnational and global complexity here that demands increased recognition and theorization” (p. 53). Thus, we need to transcend a Western-centric view to reflect on “the changing satellite news landscape, its complexity stratification and contemporary reconfiguring” (p.53).

According to Sinclair and Harrison (2004), television in Greater China” represents a conjunction of commercial and cultural forces that plays out the tension between nationhood and globalisation” (p.48). Television has been “an instrument of imagined national unities” (p. 48); however, television also has carried the countervailing discourses of globalization and regionalization, which militate against television being exploited by the narrow-term nation-state.

The ultimate purpose of this study is to consider Chinese television in the process of globalization. To be more specific, I address how the medium of television in China has faced the challenges and opportunities brought up by a global trend of media liberalization; how television in China has changed in the era of globalization; and what impacts these changes have had for media industry and social reality, both domestically and globally. To find answers to the above questions, I focus my analysis on Phoenix Satellite TV, a media enterprise launched in Hong Kong in 1996 as a joint venture between Chinese interests and Rupert Murdoch’s Star TV, with the former holding a majority share of the enterprise.

**Why Phoenix Satellite TV?**

As a “regional broadcaster” (Chan, 2006, P.106), Phoenix Satellite Television is one of the main sources of news, information, and entertainment in the Chinese-speaking world. In 2004, Phoenix was rated as the twenty third on the list of *China’s 500 Most Valuable Brands* by the
World Brand Laboratory, a leading brand-evaluation organization (Borton, 2004). According to Borton (2004), Phoenix Satellite Television is an evidence of “the inclusion of China in the globalization movement and the gradual capitalistic trajectory of the Communist Party's sclerotic communication system.”

Phoenix Satellite TV started in Hong Kong as an entertainment station, with six hours of content broadcasting daily. Since that time, Phoenix Satellite TV has developed into a conglomerate of Phoenix Satellite TV Holdings Limited. In addition to five TV channels, the corporation also has Phoenix Weekly (a news magazine), ifeng.com (a portal website), Phoenix Publishing House, and Phoenix Metropolis Media (an outdoor media operation company). In 2007, the conglomerate moved to Beijing, but Phoenix Satellite TV stay to be based in Hong Kong.

For quite a long time, Phoenix was referred to as a “Hong Kong medium.” White (2005) regards Hong Kong media as foreign media in China, which he defines as “media operating outside the direct control of the People’s Republic of China” (p. 151). However, this definition does not truly apply to Phoenix Satellite TV for several reasons. First, although its base of operations is in Hong Kong, Phoenix TV has consistently broadcasted to the Mainland China since it was established in 1996 as a ZhongWen Tai (i.e., a Chinese-Language station). Only after Phoenix TV proved successful domestically in China, did the company consider launching its international services. Phoenix started its overseas services: Phoenix Chinese News and Entertainment (i.e. Phoenix Europe) and Phoenix North America in 1999 and 2001 respectively. They were targeted to Chinese audiences with Chinese language services. To Chinese audiences in Mainland China or diaspora living in other countries, Phoenix has only ever broadcasted in Chinese Mandarin, the official language of China. Second, although based in Hong Kong for a
considerably long time, Phoenix is not especially popular for audiences over there. According to Curtin (2007), the most popular TV stations in Hong Kong are TVB (Television Broadcast) and ATV (Asia Television). One reason to account for Hong Kong people’s ignorance of Phoenix may be the language barrier – Phoenix broadcasts in Chinese Mandarin, but the dominant language in Hong Kong is Cantonese. This may also explain why Phoenix denies that it is Hong Kong television on its official website, confessing that many programs are designed for the interest of mainland and Taiwanese audiences. Another reason arguably is that the political stance of Phoenix is very pro-Chinese Communist Party (Boyd-Barrett & Xie, 2008; Chan, 2006), which is deviated from the political atmosphere in Hong Kong, especially before it returned to China in 1997.

In 2007, China Mobile, Ltd., a state-owned and state-run enterprise in China, became one of Phoenix’s biggest share holders, owning 20% of the company. In 2007, Phoenix TV Corporation moved its headquarter to Beijing, the capital city of China. Arguably with this moving, Phoenix Satellite TV became more qualified to be referred to as a “Chinese medium.” It must be clarified that “Chinese” here is a cultural-linguistic concept rather than a national one.

*Phoenix and the Chinese-speaking World*

Straubhaar (2007) states that cultural-linguistic regions of the world deserve more scholarly attention. He states that there are two types of cultural-linguistic spaces and markets. Geocultural markets are cultural-linguistic spaces that are contiguous or closely linked by geography. Transnational cultural-linguistic markets can be spread all over the planet by colonization; for example, the former Portuguese empire has produced the modern Lusophone cultural-linguistic market. Chan (2009) also argues that regional broadcasters maybe have a stronger influence
than global players, especially when global players do not have attempt to tailor-make programs for specific regions.

Curtin (2007) proposes a term, Global China Market, a concept which developed since the 1980s due to “the end of the Cold War, the rise of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the modernization policies of the PRC, the end of martial law in Taiwan, the transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, the high-tech liberalization of Singapore, the rise of consumer and youth culture across the region, and the growing wealth and influence of overseas Chinese in such cities as Vancouver, London, and Kuala Lumpur” (p.3). I do not quite agree with the term of Global China Market. Arguably Global Chinese-Speaking Market is more accurate because China usually refers to the nation-state of the People’s Republic of China, the PRC that Curtin mentioned above. Nonetheless, Curtin is correct in pointing out that the number of moviegoers and television households in this cultural-linguistic market is greater than that in the United States and Europe combined. There are more than one billion television viewers in Mainland China and sixty million “overseas Chinese” (p. 1) living in Britain, Canada, Malaysia. Taken together, Chinese audiences around the world make this cultural-linguistic community the largest media market in the world. More than conceiving the Chinese-Speaking world as a cultural linguistic region, the Chinese-speaking world should instead be categorized as a cultural linguistic community – an “imagined community,” given that there are considerable numbers of “overseas Chinese” or Chinese diaspora dispersed in different continents – due to the “time-space compression” of satellite television and other cultural products that connect them together (Zhu, 2008). Curtin (2007) cites Henry Luce, the founder of Time magazine, who argues that if the twentieth century was the American century, the twenty-first century belongs to Chinese. Therefore, the Chinese-speaking world, both as a cultural-linguistic community and as the
biggest media market in the world, merits an attentional shift of television studies, which originated from Britain and currently focuses on the Western world (Parks and Kumar, 2003). Dan Schiller (2005) also suggests that “attention needs to be focused, instead, on the structural configuration of transnational capitalism with which China’s rise is so profoundly intertwined” (p. 86). Sinclair and Harrison (2004) state that television has created news patterns of exchange within the Chinese-speaking world and has engaged in complex ways with global forces of culture and commerce.

In 2000, at the Phoenix Initial Public Offering (IPO) on the Growth Enterprise Market (GEM) of the Hong Kong stock exchange, Liu Changle, the current chair of Phoenix, announced ambitious aims: “Our vision is to become a dominant content provider of Chinese television programmes through satellite, cable redistribution and the internet targeting the Great China area, and Chinese-Speaking communities around the world” (Chan, 2000, emphasized by the author). Curtin (2007) says, “Not yet fully recognized by the PRC government, Phoenix seeks tacit acceptance of its presence on local cable systems by positioning itself within a dominant framework of Chineseness (emphasized by the author) and at the same time invoking a cosmopolitan gloss that might distinguish it from its competition. Not unlike the city of Hong Kong itself, Phoenix exploits marginality while obscuring its link to global capital” (p. 204).

Phoenix Satellite TV, as a famous, popular, and very important media enterprise in this community, arguably constitutes a lens through which we see what media globalization has brought to both China and the Chinese-speaking world. In this study, I primarily analyze the programming of two channels of Phoenix including content, format, and schedule. Also, through investigating the television market of China and comparison of programming of Phoenix to that
of other popular TV stations in China, I intend to find what Phoenix has brought to Chinese Television at large and predict where the Chinese Television is going to move toward.

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. In the next chapter, I discuss the development of Chinese media in general and television industry in particular in both historical and contextual frameworks. In the third chapter, I depict the theoretical evolution of international media studies. I touch upon the thesis of cultural/media imperialism (Schiller, 1965, Boyd-Barrett, 1977, 1998), the latest neo-liberal imperialism (Thussu, 2007a), the theory of globalization, and theory of hybridity to argue that media and neo-liberal imperialism is a viable and valid thesis to discuss the Chinese Television industry in the process of globalization. In chapter four, I analyze the programs and relevant programming factors, such as the formats and scheduling of Phoenix Chinese Channel and InfoNews Channel. The purpose of chapter 5 is to find the effects of Phoenix on the Chinese television industry. I choose two influential TV networks in Mainland China – one is Hunan TV, a provincial network with national popularity and influence, and the second is News Channel of China Central Television, the only national TV network in China – and conduct comparative studies of Phoenix InfoNews Channel with CCTV News Channel and Phoenix Chinese Channel with Hunan TV. In the last chapter, I discuss the implication of the findings of this study for the Chinese television industry and global media flow.
CHAPTER 2
EVOLUTION OF MEDIA IN CHINA,
RISE OF TV AND PHOENIX

This chapter concerns the evolution of Chinese media in general and television in particular in the global trend of media liberalization, which is marked by commercialization, deregulation, and privatization. Also, through the lens of the media, “the most political and commercial of modern industries” (Redl and Simons, 2002, p. 18), this chapter aims to reveal an insight into the reality of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and the challenges that China has to face as it emerges as a major economic and culture force in the world (Redl & Simons, 2002).

Global Context: Media Liberalization and Neo-liberalism

The term globalization, for McChesney (2001), is misleading and ideologically loaded. He suggests that a superior term would be neoliberalism, which means a set of national and international policies that put business in a dominant status over all social affairs with little countervailing force. Neo-liberalism is almost always intertwined with a deep belief in the ability of markets to use new technologies to solve social problems far better than any alternative course of action. The centerpiece of neoliberal policies is invariably a call for commercial media and communication markets to be deregulated.

Tunstall (2007) says that deregulation is totally an American term because it “refers to Washington, DC, tradition of regulatory agencies - and, in the case of communications, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)” (p. 58). Deregulation of national television systems started in the US and then the UK in the 1970s and 1980s, but reached its peak after the 1996 Telecommunications Act (Gershon, 2006). This was “clearly deregulatory in nature and
adopts competition as the basic charter for all telecommunication markets” (p. 189).

Deregulation was not the mere absence of regulation, but a politicized and carefully crafted stance of support for market policies, exposing the media to the full force of the market, the drive for profit, and privatization and commercialization.

Deregulation typically diminishes restrictions on media ownership, making it easier for media corporations to acquire or merge with one another, within or across media sectors. In those countries that have had extensive state-owned or state-protected media, deregulation makes it easier for private enterprises to interfere with the state media, and/or pushes state media to greater dependence on commercially generated revenue in spite of continued state surveillance. China is such a case. By annulling restrictions on mergers and acquisitions, deregulation almost everywhere has further concentrated media power in the hands of a few big conglomerates, even as it reduces government control. Processes of deregulation and privatization are closely interrelated. Also, political favor and private media interests are closely intertwined. According to Tunstall (2007), Rupert Murdoch played an essential role in initiation of deregulatory policies in both the US and the UK. For example, in the UK, Prime Minister Thatcher bent monopoly rules in order to allow Murdoch to acquire *The Times* and *Sunday Times* in 1981 and *Today* in 1987. In 1990, Thatcher looked the other way as Murdoch merged with a regulated and official satellite service to establish BSkyB as the UK satellite TV monopoly.

In the period of 1980-2007, media liberalization, with deregulation and commercialization as key symbols, became a global trend, transforming media markets domestically and impacting transnational communication. It was in this trend that Phoenix Satellite TV was born. Boyd-Barrett (1977, 2006) observes that transnational media influence is not restricted to content but extends to such things as media policies, practices, and the shape of media systems. Since the
The advent of liberalization, and in response to opportunities created by the collapse of communism and one-party states, more governments have imported the American media model; this has accelerated a global trend of media privatization and commercialization. Tunstall (2007) notes that during a long-term process of relative decline in US media influence worldwide, US exports nonetheless benefited from the removal, in many parts of the world, of government regulations over ownership, technology, and content. This benefit has sometimes been merely temporary, where US imports are relegated by local productions to non-peak viewing hours. Boyd-Barrett (2006) argues that deregulation of media is not necessarily the road to authentic local autonomy, but rather leads to a tyranny of local media, organized by concentrations of local capital in alliance with local centers of political power, as well as with regional and global capital. Thussu (1998) concludes that neoliberal deregulatory policy has “enabled the globalization of media markets and given free rein to mainly Western-based media conglomerates to become truly global in their operations” (p. 63). The rise of global media systems results from deregulatory policies (McChesney, 1998) and the global media system is closely related to the global capitalist political economy. Deregulation has played an essential role in boosting media imperialism from countries with power over countries with less power.

Evolution of Media and Television in China

Evolution of Media in China

Privatization, commercialization, and marketization can have different implications depending on different social contexts (Hong & Hsu, 1999). In China, these concepts likely have “Chinese characteristics.” For example, in other nations media liberalization is tied together with media commercialization. The commercialization in China, however, is without liberalization (Bandurski, 2006), and the marketization is state-managed marketization (Chan, 2003)
Tension between ideology and marketization

Media organizations in China, strictly speaking, are controlled and owned by the government. The Chinese government divides state-owned units into three types: administrative units, profitable enterprises, and non-profit units. Administrative units enjoy guaranteed funding from the government, while profitable enterprises must generate their own profit. Media organizations, as ideological apparatuses of the state, are considered as nonprofit units, meaning they are not supposed to pursue commercial interest in the market. Although in the early 1950s when China adopted the media model of Soviet Union, wherein major media organizations were fully financially supported by the government and most media institutions were financially subsided (Hong, 1998), the Chinese government no longer fully subsidizes its media organizations. Since economic reform began in 1978, government subsidies for media organizations have been gradually reduced or terminated, except for handful party organizations. This reduction in subsidies was a clear signal from the state that media institutions must now support themselves and generate revenue in the long run. This state-endorsed marketization has brought upon significant changes in the structure of China’s media system (Ma, 2000). The chart below, developed by Donald and Keane (2002), depicts the change and development of the media in China:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-reform</th>
<th>1980-1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic system</td>
<td>Command economy</td>
<td>Market reform: gradual decentralization of management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media regulation</td>
<td>Engineer state model</td>
<td>Deregulation and gradual diminution of subvention for media industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social stratification</td>
<td>Egalitarian/iron rice bowl</td>
<td>New middle class with economic capital; social capital residing in bureaucrats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Function of media

| Propaganda/mobilization of masses | Pedagogic/reform of attitude and conduct (Spiritual civilization) |

### Types of media

| Print, posters, radio, loudspeaker, Networks, film, terrestrial TV | On-line news, chat rooms; pay and satellite platforms; DVD; VCD; Cellular telephone |

### Media characteristics

| Mass line; cultural despotism | Diversification; shift to entertainment function and entrepreneurial self-sufficiency |

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**Table 2.1: the Development of the Media in China**

(Exerted from Donald and Keane, 2002, p.6)

Note: Cultural despotism refers to the monopolization of the means production and distribution of information by the party-state (Su, 1994, cited in Donald and Keane, 2002). *Iron rice bowl* refers to the group of people whose jobs were secured by the government. Most people who worked for units owned and run by states such as factories, hospitals, education, and media organizations had “iron rice bowls.”

From the late 1970s to the end of the 1990s, the government reduced or terminated its subsidy for media institutions; accordingly, its financial control was lessened, too. Media institutions inevitably began rely on advertising revenues. For this reason, the media in China acquired a new function – entertainment – which had not been present in Chinese media previously. For the first time, media institutions needed to attract viewers to gain advertising revenue. However, government regulation on the media’s responsibility for advocating and reinforcing ideology was not diminished, even with the reduction of government subsidies. Zhao (1998) notes that China’s media organizations, in transitional processes, are moving towards a profit-making ethic, yet remain conscious of their ideological responsibilities. In other words, the Chinese media must be financially responsible for themselves, but ideological responsible to the government. Ma (2000), another scholar in Chinese media, states that the media system in China in the 1990s was in the processes of “erratic reform, periodic repression, and a deep-seated contradiction between political control and market-driven changes” (p. 22), and the most
distinguishing characteristics of the Chinese media during this time was the tension between “rapid commercialization and continued ideological control” (p.22).

Ma (2000), when describing the media in China in the 1990s, states, “The China media are gaining their relative autonomy in the midst in marketization and commercialization. But the state and the market…are transforming each other to become new sociopolitical powers. In this historical juncture of social transition, the Chinese media market is both restraining and enabling” (p. 27).

*Media in China and Global Capital*

Donald and Keane (2002) argue that since 2000, China has entered an economic system of “state capitalism or authoritarian liberalism” (p. 6), which Jayasuriya (2001) defines as a system that “combines the rational circulation demanded by the operation of the capitalist economy within the authoritarian shell of the state” (quoted in Donald & Keane, p. 5). The control over the media has moved from expedient instruction by the government to the formulation of laws, rules, and guidelines in ownership, investment, and infrastructure (Ma, 2000; Donald & Keane, 2002).

With the trend of media liberalization, the newly accelerated force of global capital flow entered plenty of nations. Fung (2006) argues that it is “unrealistic” to assume that any nation-state can maintain itself as a fortress facing global capital flows. The government of China has long been aware of the inevitability of entry of global capital. Thus, the key issue is in what forms the global capital will be allowed to exist in China.

Facing global media and capital, “integration” is arguably the key term to describe the relation of China with the global media. Curran and Park (2000) state that when the global trend of commercialization meets an authoritarian regime, this results either in global media-state integration or a national-capitalist alliance. Zhao (2001) argues that under the push for China’s
accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and China’s integration with global capitalism the country’s bureaucratically controlled and market-driven communication industries have grown more and more visible to international audiences. Fung (2006) suggests that “the specific terms and conditions has meant that a newly reconstituted power bloc – consisting of the bureaucratic capitalists of a reformed party state, the capital of transnational corporations, and an emerging local urban middle class – has assumed dominance of the communication processes both internally and externally” (p. 74).

At present, the legal forms that collaborate with global capital include: co-production; foreign program production with foreign capital invested in local production teams; local production of foreign content program; joint events such as festivals and awards; program exchange; and importing of foreign and exporting of local programs (Zhang, 2003).

Through analyzing how MTV localized in China, Fung (2006) concludes that China now is flexible enough to work closely with global media. On the one hand, China works to accelerate the localization of the transnational cultural forms that global media have brought to China. Global capital, on the other hand, operates to promote the state. Facing multinational media ventures, China is not always hostile or anxious to set barriers and global media are not necessarily intent on homogenizing China.

To summarize with Thussu’s argument (2007), the marketization of media in China is “state-managed” (p. 77).

Rise of TV in China

De Burgh (2003) depicts the popularity of television in China:

Virtually everyone in China watches TV, and at the end of 1997, there were 400 million sets on private homes and over a billion people had acquired regular access to
TV programmes. In 1998, in terms of household penetration television and the number
of TV sets counted on a per capital basis, China was already well ahead of all other
developing countries and high above the average level for the world and Asia. (p.36)

Hong (1998) depicts the origin and development of television in China chronologically.
The development of television in China started in 1958 when China’s first TV station, Beijing
Television, began broadcasting. In the following two years, 23 TV stations were established in
major cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. In the early 1960s, due to political conflicts, the
former Soviet Union withdrew economic and technological aid from China. Many TV stations
had to be closed, reducing the total number from 23 to five. This was followed by the Cultural
Revolution (1966-1976), during which television's multiple functions reduced to a single one: to
publicize, explain, and express "class struggles." Anti-imperialism, anti-revisionism, and anti-
capitalism policies were erected for fulfilling the task of class struggle. Beijing Television's
regular telecasting came to a halt on January 1967, and so did local stations.

It was not until the early 1970s that television in China started to grow. In the reform
period starting from the late 1970s, television became the most rapidly growing and advanced
medium. On May 1, 1978, Beijing Television changed to China Central Television (CCTV) as
the country's only national network. By the end of the 1970s, there were about 30 stations. In the
1980s, the number of programs originating TV stations proliferated from 52 in 1983 to 422 in
1988, allowing television transmission to the capitals of 29 provinces and several remote
autonomous regions. In 1985 alone, 53 new stations were launched. By 1994, there were almost
700 TV stations nationwide, with one national, 30 provincial, 300 regional, and 350 local (Hong,
2003). Presently, this is still one national station and over 30 provincial stations, although most
of these smaller stations are able to offer national coverage that comes through the satellite signal
conveyed by the national cable system. Compared to in the past, the current number of regional and local TV stations has dramatically increased.

During the same period, the total number of television channels has also increased remarkably (Hong, 1998). In the middle of the 1980s, even the largest Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, there were only two to three channels, and for most cities there was only one channel. By the early 1990s, however, more than five channels were accessible in Beijing and Shanghai, and at least three channels were available in most other cities. By 2002, at least 24 channels were accessible in most urban areas.

The increase in broadcasting hours was also phenomenal (Hong, 1998). In 1980, on average there were only 2,018 broadcasting hours nationwide. However, the number went up to 7,698 in 1985 and then to 22,298 in 1990 (China Radio and Television Yearbook, 1987, 1988, 1992).

The development of TV set ownership is among the fastest in the world’s television history. In 1958, when the first TV station was launched in China, there were only 12 TV sets throughout the whole country (White, 2005). In 1978, there were on average 0.59 color TV sets for every 100 urban households. In the 1980s, the number increased by 100 times, rising to 59.04 sets per 100 households. By the end of 2004, every 100 urban households on average had 138 TV sets.

In the past four decades, the growth in TV stations, channels, programming hours, and set ownership all demonstrate the extraordinarily diffusion of television in China. Now, with 1.15 billion television viewers (Zhang, 2005), China constitutes the biggest television market in the world. Given the enormous growth potential of Chinese television market, Steve Marcopoto, president and managing director of Turner International Asia Pacific Ltd., predicts that if any
international company is going to be a player in the next 10 to 25 years, it has to be in Chinese-language television (The Taipei Times, 2003).

Reform and Openness

As the “mouthpiece” of China’s Community Party, television has been operated as a wholly government-owned institution in China. Controls on television are not only visible in ownership, but also in program content and advertisements. However, because China began to adopt reform and an open-door policy in 1978, television as well as other media had to change either autonomously or out of external pressure. The first change might have occurred in the 1970s when the government lifted the ban on importation of foreign media content. According to Hong (2003), importation before the reform was quantitatively limited and politically ideologically oriented. In the 1970s, imported programming occupied less than one percent of the total programming in China and the programs that were imported were exclusively from socialist countries such as the former Soviet Union and Romania. Since the late 1970s, central, regional, and local TV stations have all been looking for programming from other countries, including the USA, Mexico, Japan, and Korea, although the content of imported programs cannot conflict with the Party’s advocated theme (Lin, 2004). Another token of reform and openness in television arguably is the resurrection of advertising on television. Hong (1998) states that advertising was halted for three decades after the Party came to power in 1949, for advertising was considered to represent capitalistic consumption and culture, which in Mao era was symbol of evil. The first breakthrough in practice was made in Shanghai. Hong describes this change in this way,
On January 28, 1979, a slide show of an herbal wine appeared on STV’s screen. This was the first time that a commercial has appeared on the country’s ‘socialist television.’ This humble start symbolized the shattering of a long-standing taboo. (p. 83)

Beginning in the late 1970s, the government started to cut or even terminate subsidy for media organizations. This change inevitably resulted in the media relying on advertising revenue. Since 1979, both domestic and foreign advertising combined to be the fastest growing industry in China. According to Hong (1998), the sales of TV commercials in 1979 was 3 million RMB (about 1 million USD based on the exchange rate at that time), 4% of the country’s total sales of advertising. In 1992, the sales of television advertising jumped to 2 billion RMB (about 300 million USD at the exchange rate of that time), accounting for 30% of the country’s total advertising revenue.

Advertising

The commercialization of television has meant great opportunities to the Chinese advertising industry. Originally funded by the government, the majority of TV stations in urban China are now relying totally on advertising revenue and third-party investment to fund their survival and development. Over the last two decades, the Chinese television industry has increasingly counted on the phenomenal development of the advertising industry for maintenance and expansion (Redl & Simons, 2002).

In 1999, China’s advertising industry totaled 7.4 billion USD, according to official statistics from the State Administration of Industry and Commerce (SAIC); this was a 2,300 percent increase over the last decade. The TV industry earned 1.8 billion USD, 26% of the total advertising industry. According to statistics offered by Yuezhi Zhao (2008), the Chinese advertising industry comprised 125,394 businesses and employed 940,415 people by the end of
2005. Advertising revenue totaled 141.63 billion RMB, approximately equal to 17 billion USD, and accounted for 0.78 percent of China’s total GDP, compared with 0.04 percent in 1983.

According to Zhao (2008), with increasing dependence on advertising for revenue, the content of Chinese television has gone through a “drastic reorientation” (p. 85), characterized by the promotion of official nationalism and mass entertainment.

China Facing Satellite Television

In the early 1990s when satellite TV entered China, China’s attitude toward it was “suppressive openness,” which meant that some audiences found out access to foreign broadcasters in spite of restrictive regulation (Chan, 1996). Chan (2009) proposes “regulated openness” (p. 25) to replace out-of-date strategy of “suppressive openness,” because China now formally grants limited access to some broadcasters based out of Mainland China, including Phoenix TV, AOL Time Warner’s Entertainment Television (CETV). According to Curtin (2007), in the 1990s, the television throughout the Global China (this is Curtin’s term: he proposes Global Chinese-Speaking World to refer to the same community) has been moving into a new phase characterized by “deregulation, new technology, transnationalization, and political realignment” (p. 110).

In what follows, I depict challenges and changes the new satellite technologies have brought to television in China. In 1974, a decade after the first international satellite television experiment, Raymond Williams argued that the technology of satellite TV could create genuinely open skies, which would be an enormous gain to the people of the world (Williams, 1974). However, is the sky in China “genuinely” opened? Probably not.

With satellite technology, TV broadcasting can virtually cross national borders to reach every corner of the world, which to policy makers is threatening to national sovereignty and cultural
integrity (Won, 1993), and causes regulatory contradiction in several ways (Lee & Wang, 1995). Although satellite technology is claimed to be able to transcend borders, “such claims need to be tempered by the enduring structural and economic barriers to access to satellite television that remained in most markets” (Rai & Cottle, 2007, p.61). For example, advertisements for liquor are banned on terrestrial television in Taiwan. However, Taiwanese audiences are still exposed to such messages because they are abundantly supplied over Star TV’s channels. This is alarming to the governments of Asian countries. For this reason, in some Asian countries, including China, Vietnam, and Singapore, satellite television is more heavily regulated (Lee & Wang, 1995; White, 2003).

In the early 1990s, China banned the use of satellite dishes; only three star and better hotels, foreign embassies, and work units were allowed to install dishes. But installation of illegal dishes grew out of control. Given this situation, in 1993, the China State Council enacted new Regulations Governing Satellite Television Receiving Equipment, making provision for individual ownership but reasserting the need for license and special reasons. However, the enforcement of this regulation eventually failed. It was reported that in early 1994 nearly 11 million Chinese household owned satellite dishes, but a survey conducted in November of 1993 showed that already over 30 million households could access satellite television though satellite reception dishes or cable systems (Lee & Wang, 1995). According to statistics offered by Chan (2003), in mid-2000, 59 percent of all TV-households in China could receive satellite television through a cable system and thirty-eight percent had access to satellite television through reception dishes.

In order to enter the World Trade Organization (WTO), China has made commitments to open the media to foreign investors. However, such commitments do not include opening up
radio and television (Perkins & Cole, 2002, cited in White, 2005). Nevertheless, in practice, China has already partially opened its satellite TV market to foreign companies. According to Lin (2004), in late 2001, two foreign media companies made breakthroughs by getting their satellite TV channels into the local cable system of the Guangdong province, an affluent province bordering Hong Kong. In the next year, Guangdong Cable Networks began carrying AOL-Time Warner’s Hong Kong-based Chinese Entertainment Television (CETV), and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation’s XingKong WeiShi (Star Sky) Satellite Channel, also based in Hong Kong. Before the year 2003, China approved 30 overseas TV channels to be beamed into China. Direct dishes are still illegal in China, so satellite signals are relayed through cable systems, giving the government the means to control content. The State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), as the body to censor content and to manage the country’s existing broadcast infrastructure, took the first step in 1999 to establish provincial level network corporations, which are composed of all local stations and controlled by provincial TV stations. The ultimate goal of the SARFT is to create a nationwide radio and television network transmission company, referred to as China Cable Network, which would bring cable, wireless, and satellite transmission under its control (White, 2005). Therefore, Zhao (2008) states that while the media in China seem to have been “decentralized,” this is just “decentralized control,” with which the government in fact has significantly expanded its role in macromanaging media structure and disciplining the media. Lin (2004) similarly argues that “[b]y nature, media in China still serve as state ideological apparatus and extension of the power structure” (p.188). Under any circumstance, the media must adhere to the Party leadership and adhere to the principle of acting in the Party spirit. Even China’s entry into the WTO does not signify a change in this policy. Rupert Murdoch in 1997, when giving the keynote speech to a meeting of the
International Federation of the Periodical Press in Tokyo, commented: “We recognize that China is a distinctive market with distinctive social and moral values that western companies like News Cooperation must learn to abide by.” (Shafer, 2008).

**Media Conglomeration with “Chinese characteristic” and SARFT**

Deregulation and commercialization have led to conglomeration in the United States and other Western countries. This, in a sense, is also true to China’s media market. In the last several decades, China’s television industry has expanded rapidly. With subsidy from government dried up, television stations have had to depend on advertising and other resources for revenue. However, there is another force for media conglomeration in China, which ironically is government regulation. Chan(2004) points out, “In line with this drive for expansion is a directive of the State Administrative of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), which aims to form media conglomerates” (p. 105). Merged through administrative means, more than ten audiovisual conglomerates were formed. One of the primary purposes of forming media conglomerates through administrative means was to increase their ability to compete with Western media companies. However, many practitioners doubt whether Chinese conglomerates are strong enough for global competition because they have not gone through market selection.

**Major players in television market of China**

Chan (2009) proposes that there are three types of television players in Greater China: (1) global players, such as New Corporation and AOL Time Warner; (2) regional players focusing primarily on regional broadcasting, such as Phoenix; and (3) national players, such as CCTV. Chan, however, overlooks a fourth important type: big provincial satellite television companies that broadcast nationwide. There were over thirty provincial satellite TV stations in China by
2008. Among them, Hunan Satellite TV arguably is the most influential with the audience of 760 million (huantv.com).

Due to China’s regulation on the ownership of the media and the limitation policy for foreign media, global media players are still marginalized in China. For example, Star Sky, a subsidiary of News Corporation, launched Xingkong Weishi, a 24-hour Mandarin channel, in late 2001. However, Star Sky was only permitted in Guangdong province and feature entertainment programs. Thus, the competition Phoenix TV has to face is primarily from national players and the popular provincial satellite TV. Arguably the biggest challenge Phoenix TV has to face is from China Central Television (CCTV), the national network in China. CCTV has seventeen different channels, one of which is CCTV New Channel, a 24-hour news channel. CCTV, although facing competition from local television, it still holds a dominant status in China. For example, every provincial and local TV station has to carry CCTV’s thirty-minute evening news program, the Network News(Xinwen Lianbo) simultaneously with CCTV at 7:00 PM Beijing Time. This is the most important news program in China, for mainland Chinese watch it to keep up with the government's politics. Although CCTV still holds its dominant status, the provincial stations have developed to compete with CCTV. In 2001, six of the ten channels with the largest audience share across China were provincial stations from Shangdong, Guizhou, Lioaning, Anhui, and Hunan (Tustall, 2008). Currently, there are more than thirty provincial satellite TV networks in China. Technically, all of these formed as provincial stations but they now reach most areas of the nation through cable relay. Hunan Satellite TV’s growth in the 21st century has been enormous. It was formed on January 1, 1997, by consolidating Hunan Television's satellite broadcasting assets, and is based in Changsha, Hunan province. Shanghai Oriental Television (SHOTV) began broadcasting on January, 18 1993, and is based in Shanghai.
Chan (2009) summarizes the television system in Mainland China: in terms of television ownership and control, it is a “state monopoly, all party-controlled; being commercialized” (p. 19); with respect to policy toward transborder television, it is “moving from cultural anti-foreignism to a less severe form of cultural protectionism; censorship and quotas; limited landing rights granted to selected transborder television broadcasters” (p. 19).

Phoenix Satellite TV and Phoenix Television Corporation

*Media in Hong Kong*

Hong Kong used to be a colony of the UK. In 1997, when the sovereignty of Hong Kong returned to the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong was renamed the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. Although as a part of China, Hong Kong is politically subordinate to China’s guidance, capitalism was still the dominant ideology in the region under the promise of “one country, two systems.” Before 1997, the media in Hong Kong was essentially private and commercialized (Chan, 1996; Curtin, 2007) and there was no strict control over the media coming in and out of Hong Kong. After 1997, Ma (2000) states, the government of China has refrained from explicitly intervening in Hong Kong media. However, “the Hong Kong media have skillfully navigated a return to the Chinese orbit by depolarization and self-censorship” (p. 24). This self-censorship, without the direct administrative interference from the Chinese government but with informal networking and subtle discursive information, shapes a “complying, secularized, apoliticized, and yet free media culture” (p. 64) in Hong Kong. Ma also points out that Hong Kong has exerted a strong influence on the media environment of Mainland China, through the spillover of broadcast signals from Hong Kong television and media piracy in the form of videos, laser discs, and compact discs featuring content from Hong Kong and the
United States. For many years, Hong Kong has served as a template and window to China to relay media from the Western world.

In 1991, STAR TV, a Hong-Kong based regional satellite was launched. Five years later, Rupert Murdoch purchased STAR TV and was allowed to work with investors from China to establish Phoenix Satellite TV in Hong Kong, offering entertainment and sports programming via STAR TV channels. Ma (2000) says that “exposure to foreign programming has created a demanding media audience and increased the pressure for media commercialization and liberalization” (p. 65). The influences from media exchange, in the forms of co-production, joint ventures, international forums, and TV and film festivals, are both economic and discursive. Ma concludes that in the 1990s, Hong Kong provided Chinese media with “a new discursive context in which market capitalism is the name of the game” (p. 65).

Ownership of Phoenix Satellite TV

Phoenix Satellite Television was born and grew up in Hong Kong. It was established by a joint investment from Murdoch’s News Corporation, Today’s Asia Ltd., and China Wisdom International—a company invested and controlled by the Bank of China. 75% of its shares were owned by Today’s Asia and News Corporation. Today’s Asia Ltd. is a company based in Hong Kong, whose chairman Mr. Liu Changle owns 93% of its capital. Liu Changle also serves as chairman of Phoenix, and owns a controlling 38% interest of that company as well (White, 2005). News Corporation, associated with (now American) media mogul Rupert Murdoch, owns STAR Television (broadcasting widely through China, Asia, and America), one of the founding members of Phoenix. A smaller owner of Phoenix, China Wisdom International, is now owned by a state enterprise, the Bank of China. In 2006, a 20% stake in the company was acquired by China Mobile, a state-owned and state-run enterprise of the People’s Republic of China
government, registered in Hong Kong, with a 65% share of the mainland Chinese mobile market. The stake was bought from News Corp, whose Phoenix holding fell to 17.6%. China Mobile also has an alliance with Viacom’s MTV China, ostensibly a competitor of Star TV. In 2004, Phoenix TV reached an audience of 50 million relatively affluent households (Borton, 2004). Significantly, in 2007, Phoenix Television Corporation announced that it would move its headquarters to Beijing, although the base of Phoenix Satellite TV is still in Hong Kong.

China Mobile’s entry into the Phoenix venture puts a question mark over whether it is appropriate to continue to describe Phoenix as a purely commercial as opposed to a hybrid private and commercialized state-controlled operation.

Boyd-Barrett and Xie (2008), through analysis of Phoenix’s ownership and business model, argue that from its beginning to now, Phoenix Satellite TV “has transitioned from commercial, corporate ownership to an entity which state controlled entities have a significant, but not controlling ownership presence” (p. 14).

*Liu Changle: the Chairman and CEO of Phoenix and Phoenix’s connection with CCP*

Liu Changle had previously served as a former colonel of the People’s Liberation Army of China, and was a propagandist during the Cultural Revolution (Chinavitae.com, 2007). After graduating from the China University of Communication in 1980, Liu joined the Central People’s Radio Station, “one of the most powerful media services in pre-TV China” (Curtain, 2007, p. 199) and worked as a journalist, editor, commentator, and a senior management executive.

Liu started his own business in 1988. His business lines include petroleum, infrastructure, real estate, trading, broadcasting, and publications (ifeng.com). In 1996, Liu’s Today’s Asia Ltd., teamed up with Murdoch’s News Corporation, and China Wisdom International Ltd to establish
Phoenix Satellite Television Co. Ltd. Liu has served as the Chairman and CEO since that time. Phoenix was listed on the Hong Kong Growth Enterprise Market in 2000. Liu has a close connection with the Party and has been backed by influential political faction within the central government. In fact, this connection with the party is one of the reasons why Murdoch chose Liu and Phoenix as his partner to break into China’s market (Curtain, 2007). Most of Phoenix’s top managers originate from China and have extensive connections with Beijing authorities (Chan, 2003). Additionally, many of Phoenix’s top staff members participated in the development of broadcasting institutions in China. For example, Chui Keung, the executive director and deputy CEO of Phoenix, worked at the China Central People’s Radio Station for over ten years before joining Phoenix. These managers and staff members are not only familiar with what is acceptable on TV, but also understand what audiences have been seeing on television and what they have been missing.

Liu directed Phoenix from an entertainment channel to a multi-media group with multiple TV channels, a magazine named Phoenix Weekly, a publishing house, a web portal that interacts with Phoenix TV programs, and an advertisement company. As the founder and CEO, Liu has influence on all aspects of Phoenix, ranging from political stances to program topic selection. For example, Liu is a pious Buddhist, and has encouraged Phoenix to produce and air a considerable amount of documentaries on Buddhism.

According to Chan (2009), Phoenix confesses publically that it has a team in Shengzhen to ensure that programs produced by or aired on Phoenix channels abide by the censorship standards of China’s Communist Party (CCP).

*Programs and Channels*
When Phoenix was first launched in 1996, it was not conceived primarily as a media agency of news and current affairs, but was focused on offering entertainment. As it developed, it gradually shifted its main mission to incorporate the provision of news and information. Phoenix’s quick and comprehensive coverage of momentous news events – including the death of Deng Xiaoping, the former leader of China; the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997; and the terrorist attack on World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 – dramatically increased its popularity and credibility among viewers. On September 11th, Phoenix was able to offer live coverage within minutes of the attack, and remained live for 37 hours. At that same time, China Central Television (CCTV) offered only three hours of recorded footage.

By 2007, Phoenix had five channels: Phoenix Chinese, Phoenix Movie, Phoenix InfoNews, Phoenix North America, and Phoenix Chinese News and Entertainment (CNE). The Phoenix Chinese channel was established in 1996. Two years later, Phoenix Movie Channel was established, followed by Phoenix InfoNews Channel in 2001. Phoenix InfoNews was the only 24-hour Chinese language regional news channel broadcasting to Mainland China until CCTV launched its own news channel in 2003. Phoenix North American was established in 2000, and is based in Los Angeles. It broadcasts mainly to the United States (via Murdoch’s DirecTV) and Canada (via Rogers Cable Communications), and has more than 18 million viewers in the USA, according to the Vancouver Sun (2008). Phoenix Chinese News and Entertainment Channel (CNE), established in 1999, is based in London via Murdoch’s BSkyB platform for European distribution. In addition, Phoenix can also be accessed in Southeast Asia and Australia. With news and information as its main mission, Phoenix became a very significant media agency and a major constituent of the mediascape in the Chinese-speaking world.
With all channels broadcasting in Chinese Mandarin, Phoenix features a variety of programs, including broadcasts news, current affairs, talk shows, analysis, documentaries, and entertainment programs, like TV dramas and movies. In 2000, the Phoenix Chinese Channel had a viewership of over 42 million television households (approximately equal to 130 million people). According to its website, its main target audiences are “urban residents, higher income earners and educated sectors” (www.ifeng.com) of Chinese society. This group of people arguably constitutes an emerging urban middle class, the social class which benefited significantly and gained considerable purchasing power during the economic development of China. According to Yuezhi Zhao (2001), this group of people – together with the bureaucratic capitalists of a reformed party and the capital of transnational corporations – constitute a new power bloc that has assumed dominance over both internal and external communicative processes in China.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL EVOLUTION IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA STUDIES
IMPERIALISM THESIS, GLOBALIZATION, AND HYBRIDITY

Political Economy Approach

In this study, I examine the programming and operations strategies of Phoenix TV with reference to political the economic issues of market liberalization and media imperialism. The political economy approach has been influential in the study of the implications, extent, and history of power in global television (Parks and Kumar, 2003). In The Political Economy of Communication, Vincent Mosco defines this version of political economy as “the study if the social relations, particularly power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources” (1996, p.25). Mosco delineates four central characteristics of political economy, Janet Wasco (2003) summarize them as follows:

1. Social change and history. Political economy constitutes the traditional of classic economic theorists, uncovering the dynamics of capitalism—its cyclical nature, the growth of monopoly capital, the state apparatus, etc.

2. Social totality. Political economy is a holistic approach, or, in concrete terms, explores the relationship among commodities, institutions, social relations, and hegemony, exploring the determination among these elements, although some elements are stressed more than others.

3. Moral philosophy. Critical political economy also follows the classical theorists’ emphasis on moral philosophy, including not only analysis of the economic system, but discussion of the policy problems and moral issues which arise from it. For some contemporary scholars, this is the distinguishing characteristic of political economy.
4. *Praxis.* Finally, political economists attempt to transcend the distinction between research and policy, orienting their work towards actual social change and practices. As Karl Marx explained: “Philosophers have sought to understand the system, the point is to change it. (p. 7)

In current media studies, political economy discourse is usually associated with issues of media ownership, deregulation, commercialization, and liberalization. In Harindranath’s (2003) opinion, scholars investigating satellite broadcasting should be concerned with all four of these issues at once.

**Imperialism Thesis**

*Cultural Imperialism*

Cultural imperialism is a macroscopic theory that attempts to offer a systematic explanation of the media’s role in the exchange of information between countries, by relating the media exchange to broader struggles for regional and global power between nations and between elites and to the subsequent impact these struggles have on indigenous cultures.

Herbert Schiller (1969) proposes the theory of cultural imperialism. Within the neo-Marxist critical tradition, Schiller analyzes the global power structures of international communication industries, as well as the links between transnational business and dominant states. Schiller’s core argument is that, in the pursuit of commercial interests, huge US-based transnational corporations, often in league with Western (primarily the US) military and political interests, are undermining the cultural autonomy of the countries of the “rest” world and creating a dependency in the developing countries on both the hardware and software of communication and media. Schiller(1976) in his book *Communication and Cultural Domination* defines cultural imperialism as:
the sum of the process by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institution to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system (p.9).

Schiller argues that the declining European colonial empires—mainly the British, French, and Dutch—are being replaced by a new emergent American empire that is based on US economic, military, and informational power. According to Schiller, US-based transnational corporations have continued to grow and dominate the global economy. This economic growth has been because US business and military organizations have taken leading roles in the development and control of new electronically-based global communications systems. This spread growth of a single country’s role in the global community can influence the cultures of recipient countries, for dependence on US communications technology and investments, coupled with new demands for media products, has also increased dependence on television programs, which can influence indigenous cultures toward “American lifestyle,” beliefs, and values.

Although this theory was proposed in the late-middle of the last century, Schiller (1992), in later years, argues that US dominance of global communication increased during the 1990s with the end of Cold War and the failure of UNESCO-supported demands for New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Schiller states that the United State still plays a decisive role in promoting the ever-expanding communication sector, which is also a central pillar of the US economy. In the support of the US’s promotion of electronic-based media and communication hardware and software in the new information age of the twenty-first century, Schiller (1996) finds historical continuities in its lust for systemic power and control in other countries. In other words, the United States, through its communications technology, can
influence great control over other countries in the world. However, this is not a new trend; the US has a long tradition of passing along American ideologies with its aid to other countries.

**Media Imperialism**

Within the debate of cultural imperialism, Boyd-Barrett (1977) proposes that use of the concept “media imperialism” should specially concentrate on information and media inequalities between nations and how these inequalities reflect broader issue of dependency. As a way of analyzing the hegemonic power of mainly US-dominated international media—notably news agencies, magazines, movies, and television, Boyd-Barrett (1977) originally defines media imperialism as:

> the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected (p.117).

Boyd-Barrett (1998) emphasizes that imperialism could vary between different media and at different levels, or even different dimensions of activity within any sector of media industries. He proposes that Schiller’s “cultural imperialism” model is only appropriate to the United States and to the 1970s, for media imperialism has grown broader with respect to time and space. It can be applied to media relations between China-Hongkong-Taiwan, Australia-New Zealand, Britain-Ireland, and so forth. However, he points out the weakness of this approach.

Boyd-Barrett (1998) acknowledges the definition that he proposed in 1977 ignores the thesis of neo-colonialism which needs to include inter-ethnic, inter-cultural, inter-generational, and inter-class relations. Therefore, Boyd-Barrett has updated the theory to make it applicable to
this new context marked by the rapid and far-reaching in global media. To reformulate this theory, Boyd-Barrett suggests concentrating on the growth of media industries, because only by taking into account the full complexity of this economic sector, by getting inside the ‘black box” of meaningful production, could we generate theory that was adequate to the task and take us beyond the fairly crude political rhetoric that was part of the NWICO debate then at its height (p.165).

Thus Boyd-Barrett updates media imperialism theory in general application to the colonization of consciousness by the monopolization of communications space, regardless of the specific localities in which this process unfolds. We can rephrase this formulation as a process that involves the domination of one country, area, or group by another, in part accomplished through and with the support of communications industries (hardware and/or software in production, distribution, and reception) and the powerful multi-national corporations that control them.

These global media industries constantly reproduce a materialistic, divided, capitalist consumer society that is currently in danger of exhausting planetary resources. Among many pernicious effects is their capacity to destroy, belittle, or co-opt local cultures, languages, and representations.

To sum up, Boyd-Barrett’s (1998) media imperialism relates to the domination of a country by another, through global media industries and powerful multi-national corporations that control the flow of information and distribution of media products. These global media industries bring about a materialistic capitalist consumer society. The accusation has been the capacity of this phenomenon to destroy or belittle local cultures, which are captive recipients of capitalist values transmitted through the media.
Both cultural imperialism and media imperialism have been criticized for exaggerating the impact of imperial domination while ignoring the complexities of receiving cultures (Tomlinson, 1991; Thompson, 1995). However, Boyd-Barrett’s thesis is not only about media content; he also addresses the influence embedded in ownership, business models, programming formats, and hardwares. In his book review of Tunstall’s (2007) *Media were American*, he says:

> Older Theories of media imperialism would have necessitated equal and systematic attention to hardware as to software, distribution as to reception, advertising as to programming, ownership as to substance and – within substance – framing and argument as to mere authorship. (p.202)

Indeed, the US and other developed Western countries actually impose the most influence on less powerful countries through the export of business model, hardware, and formats. Other critics have argued that the term “imperialism,” which can be seen as the imposition of power by the rich onto the poor, implies a degree of political control by powerful nations which disappeared with the collapse of Soviet-led communism. Whether we choose to see the world as uni-polar, *aspirationally* unipolar (the US), or multi-polar, there can be little doubt in the new millennium that the world is experiencing volcanic struggles for power that demonstrate instances of both territorial and corporate imperialism. Other problematic trends of this era include the rampant growth of commercialization, the decline of public broadcasting, the dominance of entertainment programming, and a lack of genuine diversity in program genres and formats. Tunstall (1986) argues that deregulation and commercialization do not remove the media from politics or political attention. While to liberalize is to release the media from “bureaucratic control” (otherwise understood as control in the name of “public interest”), the
effect is to subject media policy to the private interests of competing media titans whose market strategies have implications at national, transnational, and global levels.

The thesis of media/cultural imperialism has become a less fashionable academic position to take since the 1990s, but this does not mean the idea cannot account for the current phenomena of international communication. Jin (2007), through analysis of prosperity of the cultural industry in Korea, which did not take place until the late 1990s, proves that in the era of globalization, Western cultural industries have changed their strategies to adjust to the changing global environment. Instead of solely focusing on exporting their cultural goods, they have invested in cultural industries in developing countries. In this way, they are able to continue to dominate the world cultural market, while also introducing and reinforcing the commercial ideologies of Western countries (p. 766).

Notwithstanding these criticism, the cultural/media imperialism thesis should not be ignored in the debate on the relationship between globalization and media. Thompson (1995), although rejecting the core argument, confesses that the thesis of media imperialism is “probably the only systematic and moderately plausible attempt to think about the globalization of communications and its impact on the modern world” (p. 173). Harindranath (2003) argues for the reinstatement of the cultural/media imperialism thesis in a new theoretical garb to explain recent developments in global television industries. According to Harindranath, cultural/media imperialism remains a useful theory to examine the relationship between television and its audiences with respect to an emerging group of transnational, cosmopolitan elites who are impervious to national boundaries or nationalist sentiment.

*Neo-Liberal Imperialism*
Based on the arguments of cultural imperialism (Schiller, 1965, 1992) and media imperialism (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, 1998), Thussu (2007a) proposes the term neo-liberal imperialism. He argues that the United States has endeavored to create the economic conditions for neo-liberal imperialism worldwide to lead more countries into the global free market system. The US has done this through multiple means, including war, international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the media. Television and television news play an important role in shaping the ideology of neo-imperialism, which emphasizes media privatization, commercialization and liberalization. In this chapter, through analyzing its television programs, content, formats, structure, and programming, I find how Phoenix has helped root the ideology of “US-managed” neo-imperialism in China, where media has been commercialized, but not really liberalized.

Globalization

*What is Globalization?*

The term “globalization” is both easy and difficult to define – there are many definitions of globalization by communication scholars, politicians, economists, and sociologists, just to mention a few, but none of these definitions is commonly assented; as Held et al. (1999) state, “no single coherent theory of globalization exists” (cited in Sparks, 2007, p. 135). For political economists Herman and McChesney (1997), the term globalization is just a euphemism for “imperialism.” Globalization is the extension of capitalism, consumerism, advertising, and media conglomeration to the entire world. Featherstone (1990) defines globalization from the perspective of cultural change as “cultural integration and disintegration processes which take place not only on an inter-state level but processes which transcend the state-society unit and can therefore be held to occur on a transnational or transsocietal level” (p.1). Rantenan (2005)
defines globalization in a more encompassing way: “Globalization is a process in which worldwide economic, political, cultural and social relations have become increasingly mediated across time and space” (p.9). Flew (2007) depicts the process and aspects of globalization in detail, stating that there are conflicting elements embedded in the process of globalization, during which, while not a homogeneous culture, there is a tendency toward a “global market.” According to Flew, the idea globalization describes a series of interrelated trends that have emerged in the world since the late 1940s, and which have accelerated in scale, impact, and significance since the 1980s. Among these are the international movements of people; international communications flows; the global circulation of ideas, ideologies, and ‘keywords;’ the emergence of local resistance to globalization for domestic political; and cultural objectives, to name a few.

**Media (and) Globalization**

Appadurai (1996) thinks that globalization is comprised of junctures and disjunctures of five “-scapes:” ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes. According to Appadurai, “the suffix –scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles. These terms with the common suffix –scape also indicate that there are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspective constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinational, diasporic communities, as well as subnational grouping and movements (whether religious, political, or economic), and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, and families” (p. 33). By ethnoscape, Appadurai refers to the landscape of moving people: tourists, immigrants, refugees,
exiles, and guest workers who constitute the shifting world. Technoscape means the fluid global configuration of technology and the fact that technologies now are moving at high speeds across previously impervious boundaries. Financescape is made up of currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations that also are moving at high speeds. Appadurai points out that the global relationship among these three scapes is “deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable” (p.35) because each of them is dependent on its own constraints and incentives, while each also acts as constraints and a parameter for movement in the others. Mediascape refers to both the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information, and the images created by the media. Ideoscape consists of ideas, worldviews, and terms and images like freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representations, and democracy. For Appadurai, globalization takes place in/via each of these scapes, through not only their interaction, global diffusion, and uniform effects, but also their difference, contradiction, and counter-tendencies—their disjunctures. Rantenan (2005) identifies two more scapes absent in Appadurai’s model, but apparent in the process of globalization: timescape and languagescape. Timescape encompasses time zones, calendars, age, generation, memory, and media time. By languagescape, Rantenan primarily refers to the spread of English, which makes it possible for people that are located in different places and who speak different native languages to interact with one another. In this sense, English is a homogenizing factor. However, Rantenan also points out that its widespread use has also heterogenized English itself. For example, English spoken in Southern Asian countries is different from that in the US or UK.

Appadurai’s (1996) model constitutes a major theoretical framework for consequent scholarships of globalization. Based on his five-scape model, Rantenan (2005) proposes that the media and communications play decisive roles in how these scapes move. The media’s decisive
role is not only visible within scapes, but also across these scapes. Flew (2007) agrees with Rantenan (2005) about the centrality of the media in the process of globalization, and offers three reasons for this centrality exists. First, media corporations have been increasingly globalizing their operations. Second, the emergence of new technologies such as the telegraph in the 19th century and satellites in the 20th century facilitate global information flows and cross-border commercial activities, as well as the role media organizations play in global communication infrastructures. Third, through global media, we can understand events in distant places, as well as the information and meaning embedded in those events.

Like Flew (2007) and Rantenan (2005), Thussu (2007b) highlights the essential place of the media in globalization. Thussu concentrates his discussion on flow of people. For Thussu, the flow of the media has been facilitated by the flow of people, especially that of professionals and students. He believes that people have played vital role in facilitating the flow of the media in the process of globalization, for people’s consumption of the media accentuates globalization. For example, the radically increasing number of Internet and mobile network users after 2000 has created a surge of transnational traffic in media products.

In the process of mediated globalization, Thussu (2007b) does not think that the flow of media is one-way from the media-rich West to the media-poor Rest. The hegemony of media conglomerates in Western countries, especially in the United States, has raised profound concerns about cultural hegemonization; however, “there is also a perceptible trend toward regionalisation and localisation of media content to suit the cultural priorities of audiences, given the heterogeneity if the global market” (p. 3). Thussu argues that, partly spurred by the dynamics of market-oriented media, cultural industries in non-Western world have experienced an unprecedented growth in most genres of media. Korean TV dramas, India movies, Latin
American soap operas, and Arabic TV news have all grown in worldwide popularity. The national and regional media interact with global (which in essence means Western, or more accurately American) media to produce hybridized or “glocal” media products. However, this interaction is not always smooth—national or regional rejection can occur just as often as adoption and adaptation of global messages. Thus, the dynamic of media flow needs to be reconfigured “at a time when the political, economic and technological contexts in which media are produced and consumed are becoming increasingly global” (p.3). The dynamic of market-oriented media encourages flow. Thus, Arabic people can see Indian movies and Chinese people can enjoy Mexican telenovelas. This trend has helped to distribute media power among many mini-centers located in local areas, and has further reduced inequalities in media access. These factors contribute to a more cosmopolitan culture, and in the long-run may affect national, regional, and even international political dynamics. The media and communication contra-flow can also shape cultural identities, energize disempowered groups, and help create political coalitions and new transnational public and private spheres.

The definitions and discussion reviewed above demonstrate that globalization is a complex process in which there are various aspects involved. Straubhaar (2007) proposes that we categorize these aspects into two sets of layers. One set of layers contains cultural and geographic aspects: global, transnational, cultural-linguistic spaces, geocultural regions, nations, global metropolises, state/provinces, and localities. The second set of layers is functional, rather like Appadurai’s model of five scapes, for these are disjunctive and differently globalized for different parts. For instance, the most densely globalized parts are those related to the effective global spread of the capitalist system, such as finance and conglomerates. Straubhaar also points out that the cultural/geographic layers and functional layers are related.
Critique of Globalization Discourse

According to Curran and Parks (2002), in the 1980s and 1990s globalization, emerged as a new orthodoxy in effects research. This new orthodoxy in effects synthesized critiques of media imperialism and re-presented them as a coherent, alternative perspective.

Sparks (2007) divides various globalization theories into “weak” and “strong” theories. Weak theories are concerned “with structure of domination, with the destruction of less profitable forms of cultural production by the larger capitalist corporations and the political and military power of the state” (p.135). Herman and McChesney’s (1997) understanding of globalization falls into this category. “Strong” theories of globalization, according to Sparks, have sufficient common underlying features to constitute a single, new paradigm. Sparks identifies five main elements to this new paradigm of globalization:

1. Autonomous logic, which states understanding globalization requires a new methodology that is radically re-productive.
2. Symbolic exchanges, and the international circulation of media products, are now central to the functioning of the global world, just as exchanges of raw materials and manufactured commodities were central to earlier epochs.
3. The global epoch is characterized by the fact that there is no dominating or controlling center to the contemporary world.
4. In the global epoch, it is no longer viable to talk of isolated “national” units, for economic life or for culture.
5. The global epoch is marked by the erosion of the power of the “Westphalian” state system, in economics, in politics, and in culture.
Arguably, the above mentioned “strong” globalization theories proposed by Feathersone (1990), Rantenan (2005) and Appadurai (1996) fall into this “strikingly new” paradigm. Sparks (2007) argues that these leading propositions associated with globalization paradigm are problematic. First, there is little evidence that scales of globalization in cultural and in economic sectors are the same. For example, the operation of cultural industries is much less globalized than that of automobiles. Second, Sparks still believes in the US’s dominant status in media artifacts, despite the obvious regional and other changes. Finally, no evidence shows that global and regional dimensions are reducing the importance of the state as a definer of cultural production. Thus, adherence to a “strong” globalization paradigm obscures central aspects of contemporary society, with which “weak” theories such as Herman and McChensye’s (1997) political economic version make a better fit. These “weak” theories keep central to their analysis of contemporary society, issues that are also traditionally central to capitalism, such as inequality and exploitation, and to imperialism, or the use of state power to coerce economic advantages for larger and more-developed societies.

Nation-States in Media Globalization

Anderson (1991) states that printed media play an essential role in constructing a nation-state, which is an imagined community where most members do not actually know one another. The media construct and maintain common destiny among members of a nation-state community. Consequent scholars apply this thesis to broadcast media. In an era of globalization, however, the media seem to threaten ideas associated with nation-states – such as nationalism and national identity – instead of maintaining or strengthening them. Provided that media markets increasingly operate on global rather than national scales, the capacity of nation-states in regulating media flows seems to become ineffectual in the face of globalization forces.
McChesney (2001) points out that it would be a mistake to buy into the notion that the globalization of media makes nation-state boundaries and geopolitical empire irrelevant. A large portion of contemporary capitalist activity, which clearly constitutes a majority of investment and employment in the world, operates primarily at national levels, and nation-states play a key role in representing these interests. The entire global regime is the result of neoliberal political policies, urged on by the US government. Perhaps even more importantly, the US military discreetly serves as the global enforcer of capitalism, thus protecting the interests of US-based corporations and investors.

John Sinclair (2004) provides a grounded argument about the relationship that exists between nation-states and mediated globalization. According to Sinclair, the nation-state has a unique role in mediated globalization—directly or indirectly, global forces such as supranational institutions must deal with, or through, nation-states. Straubhaar (2007) also argues that national cultures; national markets, supported by national governments; and national television networks all still dominate the television viewing reality of most audiences.

Tunstall (2008) supposes that national media are stronger than international media. He categorizes domestic, or non-global media into four levels. First are the national media that originate from a country’s biggest city and using the main national language. Second are regional media based in specific regions, which often use regional languages or dialects and reflect regional policies and politicians. Third are often the local media, such as local newspapers or television stations, which appeal to smaller minorities. Fourth are foreign media from neighboring nation-states. For Tunstall, media at the national or regional levels are stronger than international media, and have been for some time. He states “over the last 200 years, the nation-state has been the leading media player” (p.329). Tunstall point whether in the construction of
nations-states or in conflicts between nation-states and empires, national media have had salient roles. In the view of some scholars such as Raymond Williams (1974), the development of technologies such as satellite services has been a strong force in the growth of globalization. For Tunstall, however, these technologies have actually strengthened national and regional media. For example, with the aid of satellite technologies, national and regional television broadcasts can reach the diasporic groups who do not live in corresponding native countries. Such cases include Zee TV from India and Phoenix from China.

Flew (2007) focuses his discussion on national media policy. For him, the nation-state, as a central site of policy and governance over media and culture, has not been eliminated in the 21st century. Rather, national agencies see their political power and decision-making capacity shared or battered by diverse forces and agencies, at national, regional, and international levels, and even at the local, sub-cultural, and sub-national levels. Flew states that media policy has been central to the development of media in all of its forms. Government policy institutions regulate the ownership, production, and distribution of media, and seek to manage and shape cultural practices in order to direct media institutions towards particular political goals. This occurs not only with domestic goals but also goals at an international or global level. For example, Qatar’s “non-regulation” on Al-Jazeera has helped it become an influential Arab media agency in dialogue with both the West and the rest of the world. Similarly, Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation is considered to be the only “real” globalized conglomerate. Through his media company, Murdoch can easily reach anywhere in the world through the aid of satellite technology. However, Murdoch cannot collect money from around the world unless his companies follows the laws and regulations of each individual country and media market.
It is important to acknowledge that, facing an accelerated flow of global capital, no nation can isolate itself as a fortress (Fung, 2006). When facing a global force, there is obviously a difference in the wealth, strength, and prestige of actual nation-states. These qualities combine to bestow nation-states different levels of receptiveness toward globalization (Sinclair, 2004). Hardt and Negri (2001) articulate that transnational capital creates centers of power, but does so without territorial centers and without restricting itself with fixed boundaries or barriers. This trend deterritorializes and progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, embracing, and expanding frontiers.

Hybridity: Cultural Impact of Globalization

Parallel with the rapid expansion of technological and economic changes to regions and countries, cultural hybridity can be considered as another essential element of recent globalization.

For cultural impacts of globalization, Samuel Huntington (2000) proposes differentiation theory, which foresees hardening divisions between civilized spheres—defined as a loose mixture of nation-states, religious identities, language groups, and cultural practices—between the Christian West, Islamic Middle-East, and Confucian East Asia. This theory has been criticized severely since its publication for it is based on fixed and discrete understandings of cultural difference.

Stuart Hall (1996, cited in Rantenan, 2005) writes that there can be three consequences of globalization: (1) cultural homogenization forms and national identities are eroded; (2) national or local identities are strengthened by resistance to globalization; and (3) although national identities may be declining, new identities are formed.
Homogenization, termed also as “McDonaldization,” is a myth, for it ignores local and regional reactions to globalization, as well as the cultural counter flow that occurs from non-American or non-Western countries to the West. The thesis of homogenization holds that globalization represents the global spread of American values. Thus, another term for homogenization is Americanization. However, just as I discussed, this cultural homogenization is a myth. Its logical outcome, that is, the erosion of national identities, did not and cannot occur. A second possible outcome is also a myth. Straubahhar (2007) states that complete resistance is not possible. Thus, maintenance of original identities or mixture of identities, rather than the complete adoption of Western values, may take place. In fact, globalization involves both homogenization and heterogenization, and these processes move in different ways in different cultural, political, and economic spheres. According to Rantenan (2005), the third possible consequence, the formation of new identities, is facilitated by messages and images that cross frontiers. Many of these new identities are supported by media and communications that connect people wherever they live. These new identities were believed to be a form of cultural hybridity by the majority of scholars.

In contrast with Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” approach, which assumes that cultural difference is fixed and cultures are discrete, hybridity theory focuses on the fluidity, open-endedness, and interconnectedness of cultures, of which global media flows are an important constitutive elements. While the theory of homogenization points to the domination of one culture over others on the basis of its economic advantages, theories of hybridity and hybridization point out the complexities and adaptation processes that occur when cultural forms derived from one place make contact with the diverse formations of identity, culture, and practice that have emerged elsewhere (Flew, 2007).
It has increasingly been argued that the concept of hybridity is central to understanding globalization, especially in regards to the relationship between global media, culture, and identity (Kraidy, 2005). Kraidy defines hybridity as “a prima facie global condition caused by voluntary migration, war, invasions, slavery, intermarriages, and trade” (p. 46). Straubhaar (2007) illustrates the specific process of hybridization, which is the adaptation of forces and changes from globalization into local cultures, economies, and social systems. In some cases of genuine hybridity, substantially new cultures are synthesized out of the elements of original cultures. In other cases, multiple layers are created from substantial parts of the previous different cultures. In many cases, both happen.

Kraidy (2005) argues that hybridity is the cultural logic of globalization. Straubhaar (2007) states that to define culture in the era of globalization is to define the process of hybridization—“hybridization is key to understanding the historic dimensions of globalization… globalization essentially is hybridity” (p. 32). Just as Straubhaar notes about the process of globalization, the process of hybridization begins with flows—flows of people, technologies, economic systems, and cultural models, and, more recently, the flow of the media.

*Media and Hybridity*

The media are central to the process of globalization; they are also central to the global provision of cultural resources (Flew, 2007). Thus, Kraidy (2005) and other scholars believe that the media play a central role in the formation of hybridity, which, as I discuss in the preceding section, is believed by some to be the primary impact of globalization on culture. Kraidy cites Martin-Barbero to state that the significance of the media lies in their capacity to create meanings more than in their capacity to carry information or reinforce ideology. In his *Hybridity*, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization, Kraidy presented an ethnographic study of a Maronite
youths’ lived experience of hybridity in Lebanon in order to illustrate the role of mediated communication in the formation and maintenance of hybridity as an existential condition. According to Kraidy, the Maronite youths’ reception of foreign media created a sort of hybridity of “West” and “Arab” in their identities. Rantenan (2005), in her book *The Media and Globalization*, through the exploration of the media use of three families in three different countries, across four generations, shows us how to understand the relationship between media and globalization and various processes at work. She does not mention the term hybridity in this book; however, it is quite visible that the members of the fourth generation of each family (members who were born in the 1970s) are hybridized by their exposure to a large diversity of media texts, including those ones from other countries. For example, Junjie’s (from the fourth generation of the Chinese family) identity changed from local to national to cosmopolitan due to his overseas experience in the UK. These identities are not mutually exclusive. There is continuity; that is, there are cosmopolitan layers in Junjie’s original identity — this constitutes hybridity.

Straubhaar (2007), through investigations of television flows across the globe, suggests that the flow of television created multiple layers of identity and culture, especially on receivers’ side. Straubhaar’s argument is not circumscribed to television receivers’ national or cultural identities, but also extends to their social class identities. This makes sense, for social classes are different in their exposure to and consumption of the media. For example, people in the middle-class in Brazil are more likely to choose media products imported from the US than people in the working-class. Thus, their layers of identities are more complicated and more “globalized.” However, in addition to hybridity, Straubhaar also theorized this phenomenon as “multiple layers of identity and culture” (p.230). To explain, he says, “Multiple cultural layers often form from
the interaction of cultures, and those multiple layers persist, even as hybridization and mixture take place. Given the seemingly ubiquity of hybridization as a process over time…, there will be layers of mixture as well” (p.230). For Straubhaar, the cultural layer from the exterior culture can co-exist with traditional cultural layers. Cultural elements sometimes survive as layers of culture and identity associated with social classes and groups, but they can also survive as identities within individuals and various forms of collectivities.

Approaching Hybridity

The hybridity discourse, according to Flew (2007), has helped de-centralize a dominant evolutionary meta-narrative regarding globalization. But Kraidy (2005) warns that the claim that hybridity is symptomatic of resistance to globalization is troublesome, and the assertion that cultural mixture reflects the lightness of globalization’s hand is misguided, as well. Cultural hybridity is compatible with globalization because it, in a sense, helps globalization work through a variety of local capitals. Hybridity implies that traces of other cultures exist in every culture, which accounts for why foreign media and marketers can forge affective links between their products and local communities.

Both globalization and hybridity take place as a process, not as a fixed consequence. In addition, not all cultures are equally vulnerable to the influence of outside cultures. These qualities combined indicate that we must understand hybridity in historic contexts. The concept of hybridity, in fact, has been drawing attention to diverse contexts and experiences that lead different parts of the world into globalized circuits of capitalist modernity. Thus, hybridity must be put in historic and spatial contexts to be understood.

Flew (2007) offers several good examples of this context-based understanding. For most countries in Western European, such as Britain and France, which were formed in the 18th or
19th century, globalization is a challenge to an already established national sovereignty, where there is a congruity between polity, economy, and culture. By contrast, for post-colonial countries such as India and some Caribbean countries to face globalization, they must attempt to put in place the economic and cultural policy infrastructures that indicate sovereignty of newly independent states. Even within the same geographic region, different countries may have different attitudes toward hybridization from other cultures. For example, France resists hybridization from American media much more strongly than Britain, which shares a common language with the US.

To summarize, the theories of globalization, the imperialism thesis, and theory of hybridity reflect how globalization, and the media in globalization, can be considered from various perspectives. While globalization theories are more encompassing, in some ways, than the original theories of cultural and media imperialism, they too have been found wanting. In particular, they have fatally downplayed the survival of the nation-state as a core definer and channeler of power and, therefore, have failed to come to terms with both continuing and with newly re-configured inequalities of power and dependencies within oppressive power relations. The concept of neo-liberal imperialism helps to resolve the tension between theories of imperialism and globalization. The theory of hybridity’s foregrounding of the representations of local identity may “obscure penetration of local structures by corporate and regular agencies, models and values of the global economy” (Boyd-Barrett, 2006, p. 54). This study therefore aims to investigate the Chinese media in the framework of the imperialism thesis, with the lens of Phoenix Satellite TV. Based on my description and critiques of significant theories in global media, and a literature review of developments in Chinese media in general and Chinese TV in particular, I ask the following research questions.
Research Questions

As stated above, through investigation of Phoenix TV and comparison of Phoenix with other leader TV networks in China, the ultimate purpose of this study is to find out how television in China have changed in the era of globalization and what impact these changes have had for media industry and social reality, both domestically and globally. Thus, this study is meant to answer the following questions in the theoretical framework of imperialism thesis:

RQ1: As a Chinese media enterprise born in the era of neo-liberalism, with media liberalization as one of its characteristics but broadcasting to Mainland China – which usually is associated with tight media control on ownership and journalism – how has Phoenix balanced the competing demands of high profit-orientation, a US or neo-liberal style business model, governmental regulations, and the issues of modernization and Westernization?

RQ2: To what extent are the programming strategies manifested by Phoenix convergent or divergent with the strategies of other leading popular TV stations in Mainland China?

Methods

Data Collection

The primary data of this study are drawn from Phoenix Chinese Channel, Phoenix InfoNews, and ifeng.com, the official website of Phoenix. The data are collected through reviewing programs on these two channels.

The entire process of data collection was divided into two sessions. The first session took place on December 29, 2008, during the television prime hours from 7:00 pm through 12:00 am. All programs aired on Phoenix Chinese Channel and Phoenix InfoNews during this time were recorded. The programming genres of both Phoenix channels during the selected time period included news (both news reports and news commentaries), documentaries, commercials, talk
shows, and TV dramas. Given that the emphasis of analysis was on news programs, a second session was used to collect data Phoenix’s two major news programs: *China News Live* and *The Asia Journal*. Review of these programs occurred from December 5 to December 11, 2009. Because this study’s analysis stops at the level of news topic, instead of recording, I took detailed notes of the news topics presented in each episode of the two programs. Also I took notes on what products were advertised and how long commercial breaks lasted for analysis of the programs’ advertisements.

Program descriptions and schedules were also data pertinent to this study. This information was retrieved from ifeng.com, the official website of Phoenix Corporation.

For the purpose of comparison analysis, supplementary data was collected from Hunan Satellite TV and CCTV News Channel. Data were recorded from these two channels with the same process and the same time periods listed above. Programming schedules and program descriptions for these two channels were retrieved from their corresponding websites: hunantv.com and cctv.com, respectively.

I choose the Satellite channel of Hunan Television and CCTV News Channel, for they respectively represent national and regional levels of the Chinese TV industry. Hunan Television, the former Hunan Satellite TV, was formed at the beginning of 1997, by consolidating Hunan Television's satellite broadcasting assets. In December 2002, it became Hunan Television, the first provincial-level broadcasting conglomerate, through the merging of Hunan Television, Hunan Economic Television, and Hunan Cable Television. As a provincial TV system, Hunan TV covers 60 percent of China and has a viewership of 760 million. The system has one comprehensive satellite channel and other seven channels. It is worth noting that Hunan TV has hosted a series of very popular reality singing contests: *Super Girl* (Chaoji
Happy Boys (Kuaile Nansheng) in 2006, and Happy Girls (Kauile Nvsheng) in 2009. All of these are Chinese adaption of American Idol. According to Zhao (2008), Hunan TV has constituted the most successful commercial broadcasting system in China through a focused pursuit of entertainment programming. As the most popular and influential provincial TV entity in China, Hunan TV arguably is the biggest rival of CCTV and Phoenix in Mainland China. Most likely as a competitive strategy, Hunan TV tried to walk the political tightrope by touching on politically controversial topics. In other words, the network has tried to gain audiences by airing stories that can be seen as critical of China’s ruling party. For example, in early 2001, it produced a four-episode report about economic privatization in China. The airing of this program was stopped by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SAFRT) of China after the third episode, which was perceived to be too politically sensitive. Consequently, the deputy head of the station was ordered to step down and the whole program was cancelled (Chan, 2003).

CCTV is China’s national TV network, and has sixteen different channels. One of these channels is CCTV News, a 24/7 news channel launched in May of 2003 to compete with Phoenix InfoNews. So far, CCTV News and Phoenix InfoNews are the only two news channels broadcasting 24 hours a day and 7 days a week in Mainland China. According to Chan (2003), Phoenix is the first real alternative to CCTV audiences have had and has thus played a significant role in eroding CCTV’s monopoly over the TV market in Mainland China.

To sum up, the data in this study included TV programs from four channels of three TV stations, as well as text descriptions of programs and program schedules retrieved from the websites of these three TV stations.

Data Analysis

Content analysis
One of the primary methods adopted in this study is qualitative content analysis. According to Berger (1998), content analysis is a research technique that involves measuring something in a random sampling of some form of communication. The basic assumption implicit in content analysis is that an investigation of message and communication will allow some insight into the people who receive the messages.

Content, according to McQuail (2005), is the most accessible evidence of how mass media works, although it is misleading to equate the media with the message. “Traditional” content analysis, by Berelson’s (1952) definition, is the earliest and still most widely practiced method of research and is a systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. However, quantitative techniques have been criticized for missing syntactical and semantic information embedded in the text (Weber, 1990). Qualitative content analysis, on the other hand, occurs at the place where quantitative presentation reaches its limits. Qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying theme or patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278) and “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step modles, without rash quantification” (Marying, 2005, p. 5). The above definitions illustrate that qualitative content analysis emphasizes an integrated view of data and their specific contexts, allowing researchers to interpret social reality in a subjective yet scientific manner.

The content analysis in this study is primarily, but not exclusively, based on the data collected during the second session, that is the seven-day viewing of the major news programs *China News Live* and *The Asian Journal*. The news topics of these programs were analyzed
under the themes of infotainment, elite-orientation, and global coverage. The primary units of analysis are topic selections of news programs and topic selections and content of other programs.

*Analysis of programming format*

The programming genres on two channels of Phoenix during the selected time period include news (including news reports and news commentaries), documentaries, commercials, talks shows, and TV dramas.

Programming format is understood as “that set of invariable elements in a program out of which the variable elements of an individual episode are produced” (Casey et al., 2008, p. 61). TV format has been a crucial mechanism in regulating and recycling of program content across different television systems worldwide. As Allen and Hill (2004) point out, the international market in television formats has exploded in recent years, as cable and satellite system have drastically increased channel capacity and hence the need for programming to fill channel schedules. Bodycombe (2002, cited in Keane, Fung, & Moran, 2007) says that a format sale is really a product sale, wherein the product is a recipe with which TV programs can be reproduced for another territory as a local program. Keane, Fung, and Moran argue that “formats” do not constitute single object. Rather, a format is “a complex abstract and multiple entity that is typically manifest in a series of overlapping but separate forms” (p. 62). Thus, according to Allen and Hill (2004), through the lens of TV formats and the international circulation of formats, we can investigate questions about the international circulation of culture. What, exactly, is being circulated? What in cultural term is being “exported” and “imported”? 
In this study, I examine formats of two Phoenix channels, to identify what patterns of formatting and operations Phoenix TV has developed and in turn popularized in China and what implication it has had for the Chinese TV industry and society.

Analysis of scheduling/programming structure

A television schedule, as the running order in which programs are placed during a day, gives structure and meaning to blocks of programs on a given channel. A familiarity with the schedule could facilitate a habitual viewing response in audience members, allowing broadcasters to predict who is watching and when. This predictability is crucial, as one of the core aims of scheduling is to assist broadcasters in capturing the biggest audience possible, so as to maximize advertising revenue (Casey et al., 2008), the lifeline for most TV stations worldwide.

Media scholars have shown little interest in examining television scheduling practices. However, although incomplete, research examining international television flows has recognized that scheduling practices mediate the cultural impact of foreign programming on domestic television culture (Havens, 2007). Thus, Havens defines program schedules as hybrid phenomena that calls attention to the processes of cultural negotiation that contemporary scheduling entails. This study focuses on the schedules of and Phoenix Chinese Channel and Phoenix InfoNews retrieved from ifeng.com. From the schedules of both channels, I intend to find out in some detail the variety of factors, both international and domestic, that come into play in specific scheduling decisions, paying particular attention to the conditions under which power relations among national, regional, and global ideas about scheduling differ.
To answer research question 2, I compare the program content, format, and schedule of Phoenix’s Chinese Channel to Hunan Satellite TV, as well as Phoenix’s InfoNews to CCTV News.
CHAPTER 4

PROGRAMS OF PHOENIX

The logo of Phoenix is made up of two phoenixes, flying in a dance and swirling head-to-tail around a central point to constitute a ring.

![Picture 4.1: The Logo of Phoenix](image)

According to the staff of Phoenix (cited in Curtin, 2007), this elaborately designed logo looks like the iris of a camera, as well as a *Fengshui Bagua*, which means the harmony and balance of yin and yang, the two complementary life forces. Thus, the logo of Phoenix implies that “Phoenix represents something is brand new but also something that is very Chinese. It is new and old, Western and Eastern…” (p. 202). The logo also implies the mixture of southern and northern China. Southern China refers to Hong Kong, where Phoenix was born, and Guangdong, where Phoenix has 100% landing. Northern China refers to areas north of Hong Kong and Guangdong. Phoenix develops their programming strategies with these two cultures in mind. In this chapter, I focus my analysis on the programming strategies of Phoenix and seek to find if the harmony implied in its logo exists in its programming.

On its website, Phoenix states Chinese Channel is “the window to the world for the Chinese global community and it is renowned for international quality and unique presentation” (ifeng.com). Whether and how Phoenix became the window of the Chinese community to the
world is not the mission of this chapter. This chapter seeks to find out how it is renowned for its “international quality,” what criterion Phoenix adopts for to have international quality, and what presentation style Phoenix uses to have international quality. The chapter also looks at how Phoenix must also balance maintaining “international committee” and toeing the party line.

The US-inspired market-driven media model is a key outcome of the television globalization (Thussu, 2007a). Just two years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russian government began allowing private-run television networks to co-exist with state networks. China is still a communist country, but like Russia and other former, it has shifted from planned economy to market economy strategies. Television networks in China existed through the transition from Maoist propaganda to marketized entities. Nevertheless, Chinese television is still a state-controlled medium. Media institutions in other fields are also state-owned and state-controlled. However, China is not an isolated country like it was in the era of the Cultural Revolution. The country’s government decided to “re-enter” the world in the late 1970s, with the policies of Reform and Opening-up. It encouraged global capital and, in an effort to attract global capital, the government adjusted its trade policies and regulations accordingly, culminating in its accession to membership of the World Trade Organization in 2001. The flow of financial capital is not only about money. It is also a source of and has consequences for ideology.

This first section of analysis is concerned with news programming, which Phoenix has greatly emphasized. Not only does Phoenix run a 24/7 InfoNews Channel, it also allocates a considerable portion of airtime to news and current affair program on other channels. News programming has a unique influence on society and politics, a quality which other television programming genres do not share. According to Casey et al. (2008), news does not simply
reflect reality as it occurs but represents events and ideas in particular ways. Casey et al. argue that news is a “social construction” (p. 186) that produces versions of reality. Similarly, Thussu (2007a) points out that news can yield significant political influence, although it is not as profitable as entertainment or sports programs, and television news helps shape people’s worldview. News programs thus accordingly have higher political risks than any other kinds of programs.

Given the significant social and political influence of news, and Phoenix’s emphasis on it, the first part of this chapter examines Phoenix’s news programs in the context of global media commercialization, explores the programs’ characteristics, and looks at what implication these characteristics may carry for audiences, society, and the television industry of the Chinese-speaking world. To be more specific, the first section of this chapter examines news programming on two primary Phoenix TV channels – Phoenix Chinese Channel and Phoenix InfoNews Channel – in the context of China’s unique “commercialization without liberalization.” The analysis touches upon news content, topics, and formats, as well as other aspects of programming, such as commercials within programs.

News Programs

**Phoenix InfoNews and Chinese: Overview of News Programs**

Phoenix InfoNews is one of 18 24/7 news networks that broadcast globally. To run a 24/7 news channel is an expensive operation, so only large media conglomerates or well-funded state organizations can afford them (Thussu, 2007a). This partly accounts for why in Mainland China, only Phoenix and China Central Television have 24/7 news service. Another possible reason is that the Chinese government does not allow private or foreign media to run news channels in China. Phoenix InfoNews is the only non-state-owned news channel that can air in Mainland
China, as well as the only 24/7 news network broadcasting in Chinese Mandarin that Chinese diasporas can receive in their sojourn countries.

Phoenix InfoNews was launched in January 2001, making it the very first Chinese-language 24/7 news channel. However, the channel did not obtain the right to broadcast in Mainland China until 2003, when it was permitted limited access to the Guangdong province, at which point it became the first 24/7 news network broadcasting to China. In fact, before the limited landing permission was granted by the government, some residents in China were able to receive Phoenix InfoNews via illegally-installed satellite dishes or other means. The mission of Phoenix InfoNews is to reach high-end mainland Chinese audiences who are hungry for international news coverage presented in Chinese Mandarin. In what follows, I present an overview of news programs on Phoenix InfoNews and Phoenix Chinese Channels, and analyze the major news programs in theoretical framework of Boyd-Barrett (1998) and Thussu’s (2007a) thesis of imperialism.

Raymond Williams (1974) divides news programs into four categories: news bulletins, general news magazines, news magazines for particular ethnic groups, and discussion of public affairs. Phoenix carries three kinds: news bulletins, general news magazines, and discussion of public affairs. Phoenix’s major news magazine programs include *Good Morning China* (*Fenghuang Zaobanche*) at 7:00 am (first run) and 8:00 am (repeat) on weekdays and *The Asia Journal* (*Shishi Zhitong Che*) at 9:00 pm every day. The two shows are broadcast simultaneously on Phoenix Chinese and InfoNews Channels. In fact, these two programs are simulcast across the globe on Phoenix North America and Phoenix Chinese News and Entertainment (CNE) at the same time. There is also an exclusive news magazine program on Phoenix InfoNews named *China News Live* (*Huanwen Dazhibo*). News bulletin programs on Phoenix InfoNews include
Showbiz Report (Fenghuang Zhengdian Bobao), which is aired ten times a day, every day at 1:00 am, 2:00 am, 3:00 am, 5:00 am, 6:00 am, 10:00 am, 11:00 am, 1:00 pm, 2:00 pm, and 15:00 pm. Other news programs include: 12:00 pm News Express (Fenghuang Wujian Tekuai), Phoenix Focus (Fenghuang Jiaodian Xinwen), and Phoenix Info Billboard (Fenghuang Zixun Bang). There are also current affairs discussion programs such as The Chief Editor’s Time (Zongbianji Shijian), News Talk (Xinwen Jinri Tan), Sisy’s News (Jiema Chen Wenqian), and Shanghai International Reports (Zhenghai Tingfenglu). Phoenix InfoNews also supplies financial news services such as Finance Point to Point (Caijing Dianduidian), Moneywise (Caizhi Quangonglue), and Financial Journal (Jinshi Caijing ), catering social elites.

Phoenix Chinese is a comprehensive channel, meaning it shows several different programming genres; however it does allocate a large chunk of airtime to news and current affairs. The main news magazine programs on Phoenix Chinese are The Asia Journal (Shishi Zhitong Che) and Good Morning, China (Fenghuang Zaoban Che). The Asia Journal is a primary news program aired live every night. On its website, The Asia Journal states its mission is to report world events and offer in-depth coverage of the latest social, economic, cultural, and sports news from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. The program is divided into segments including ‘World Express,’ which covers headline news from around the world; ‘Cross Taiwan Straight’ and ‘Focus on Hong Kong and Macau;’ ‘Science and Technology;’ and ‘Glance at the World’ (ifeng.com, 2008). Good Morning, China is a one-hour news program, aired every weekday morning from 7:00 am to 8:00 am and repeated once from 8:00 am to 9:00 am. It covers financial news, including the previous night's closings on Asian stock markets and early reports on European exchanges. Also, it presents daily headlines from Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese newspapers. Besides these two primary news magazine programs, Phoenix also airs
shorter news report programs including two twenty-five minute programs. One is *Phoenix Midnight Express (Fenghuang Ziye Kuaiche)*, aired from 12:00 am to 12:25 pm to cater to late-night audiences. The other is *Phoenix Afternoon Express (Fenghuang Wujian Tekuai)*, scheduled 12:00 pm to 12:25 pm Monday through Friday and presenting the most recent international and financial news. In addition, Phoenix features news bulletin programs that last between two to five minutes. These are *Phoenix Express (Fenghuang Kuaibao)*, a two minute program broadcasted every one hour debriefing key issues from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and around the globe, and *News Update (Shishi Kuaibao)*, a five-minute live bulletin aired every day at 6:55pm to give viewers a brief glimpse of the day's top stories that are later covered in-depth on *The Asia Journal*. Phoenix also features a news program that draws on content from globally well-known press such as *Times, News Weekly*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, called *Press Reading and Critique (You Bao Tiantian Du)*.

*Good Morning, China, The Asia Journal, and Press Reading and Critique* each air twice daily, meaning the Phoenix Chinese Channel airs more than five hours of news programming each day.

**Global Coverage**

Phoenix TV claims on ifeng.com, its official website, that its target audience is composed of “urban residents, higher income earners and educated sectors” (www.ifeng.com). The characteristics of this group are” three highs and one low,” that is high official rank, high income, high education level, and low age. In fact, Phoenix InfoNews was launched to supply information and news services to domestic elites and accordingly attract advertisers targeted at this group (Zhao, 2008). In China, contrary to the common Western perception of television being a “dumbing down” medium associated with lack of education, idleness, and
unemployment, television is seen in China as a symbol of modernity. “The image and symbols that flows in through television usher in a new cultural order that challenges long-standing habits and ideologies” (Xu, 2009, p. 153). In comparison with print media, which is censored more meticulously by the Chinese government, television to a greater extent represents an open global culture (Lee, 2003). Also on ifeng.com, Phoenix claims that the global coverage of its news service is much more comprehensive than that of any comparable Chinese language broadcasters (ifeng.com). Indeed, Phoenix’s coverage of globally significant events is usually more encompassing and more in-depth than coverage on other networks in China. While reporting the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, China Central Television, the state TV network, only offered a five-minute report, whereas Phoenix cut off its regular programming to provide round-the-clock coverage.

*The Asia Journal (Shishi Zhitongche)* is a signature news magazine program of Phoenix, and airs live 9:00 to 9:45 pm (Beijing Time) everyday. On the English website of Phoenix, ifeng.com, *The Asia Journal* was introduced as the following:

Broadcast live at 9pm every night, *The Asia Journal* reports world events with in-depth coverage of the latest social, economic, cultural and sports news from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China with a special Hong Kong segment featured every day. With objective reporting and in-depth news analysis… (ifeng.com)

However, areas beyond Greater China, especially those beyond Mainland China, seem more appealing to Phoenix. During the seven days from December 5 to December 11, 2009, the Global Climate Change Conference held in Denmark constituted the headlines of five days. Other news events that made it into the headlines of *The Asia Journal* during this time included the US special envoy’s visit to North Korea, Taiwan mayoral and council elections, the opening of East
Asian Games in Hong Kong, and the end of the Central Economic Work Conference. In other words, the stories tended to be about international issues. The headline of The Asia Journal on December 29, 2008 was about the court trial of Chen Shui-bian, the former leader of Taiwan who was charged with graft. Thus, although named The Asia Journal and described as a program with coverage of the latest news in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, this signature program of Phoenix pays great attention to events which happen beyond greater China. In fact, alongside the major stories that focus on international events, The Asia Journal also has a segment called “World Express,” which specializes in news that takes place outside of China.

China News Live (Huawen Dazhibo) is a live news program that exclusively airs on InfoNews Channel. China News Live starts at 7:00 pm everyday and lasts 45 minutes on weekdays and 15 minutes on weekends. The mission of this program is to cover the latest events in Greater China Area (ifeng.com). However, like The Asia Journal, this program tends to feature news events that, while relevant to Chinese interest, occur beyond Chinese borders. Of all the headlines of stories broadcast between December 5 and December 11, three were about the Global Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. The process of East Asian Games in Hong Kong was also featured three times. One headline was about the winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, Dr. Gao Kun’s presence in the Awards Ceremony. Another headline was about the Chinese Ambassador’s speech at 2009 English-Speaking Union (ESU) Churchill Lecture, UK. The main story of China News Live on December 29, 2008 was about the court trial of Chen Shui-bian, the former leader of Taiwan. During the time of the second round of data collection for this study, no news events that actually occurred in Mainland China were included in headlines of China News Live.

As a Mandarin service network, Phoenix tends to excel at covering world events,
especially when compared to other networks like the CCTV. This is not only reflected by its news topic selections, but also its depth of news coverage and the fact that it airs live. Arguably because it is prohibited by the Chinese government from covering the domestic, national news that is usually monopolized by CCTV, Phoenix has to turn to news in other areas of the world to fill out its airtime. Phoenix’s professional and financial affiliation with Western media conglomerates such as News Corporation has provided it with advantages in terms of capital, techniques, and content. Phoenix Satellite TV has access to footage from Fox News when reporting events from the US or other countries. Because of this, Phoenix’s reporting of 9/11 was much faster and more comprehensive than other Mandarin service TV networks such as China Central Television (Zhao, 2008). For the Iraq War, Phoenix also drew news content from Fox. The background of Phoenix’s live-broadcasting studio used for stories of the Iraq War is a big TV screen that constantly presents footage from Fox News. Also with the help of Fox, Phoenix was the only Mandarin-service TV network that covered President Obama’s inauguration live. Phoenix also has established global live studios in Washington, Moscow, Paris, Tokyo, and other metropolises. These studios report the local news or international events that occur in these areas on a daily basis. However, how far is this “global” coverage meaningfully “global” in practice? Phoenix pays much attention to the United States, and to countries in Europe and the Middle East, a region in which the US is deeply interested and involved. South American countries and most African countries either have a low profile or are simply absent in Phoenix’s global coverage, unless an event catches international attention. The ‘World Express’ segment of *The Asia Journal* from December 5 to December 11, 2009 covered a nightclub fire in Russia, a suicidal bomb explosion in Iraq, the turbulence in Greece, and the US Assistant Secretary of State’s speech about Sino-American relations. Phoenix had nothing to say
about Africa during the second period of data collection. On December 29, 2008, there was a report on pirates in Somalia, an issue that took place in Africa but involved the US and other countries including China.

Infotainment

According to Lee (2003), for the giant players in the US media market, such as Viacom or News Corporation, news is “another industry product” (p. 9) which is no longer immune from the pressure of profit making. News has become a “profit stream” (p.9) and must gain audiences; despite this, however, the news programs’ audiences are dwarfed by those of entertainment programs. Because of this trend, infotainment has replaced serious journalism for instant gratification of mass media consumers.

Since August 2009, the primary news magazine programs such as Good Morning China and The Asia Journal, as well as other break-in brief news programs, have reported continuously on the investigation and court trial of Sakai Noriko’s, a Japanese actress and singer who was charged with possessing illegal drugs. This continuous coverage is evidence illustrating Phoenix’s commitment to the global coverage they promised to their audience, but more specifically demonstrates their commitment to infotainment.

This commitment is demonstrated on Phoenix’s website, which claims that “Phoenix Television is well-known of providing Infotainment programmes with popular 'Star' Anchors and talk show hosts” (ifeng.com). One of Phoenix’s missions is to “promote free flow of information and entertainment within the Greater China Region” (ifeng.com). Infotainment is also evident in the ways in which programs are introduced. On Phoenix’s website, for example, shows are introduced as, “a 30-minute news commentary with a difference, Du Bao Magazine Critique is both informative and entertaining” (ifeng.com). In other words, Phoenix admits and emphasizes
the fact that its informative news programs are also meant to entertain.

Thussu (2007a) says that infotainment has contributed to the rise of commercialism of television news. It is disputable that has actually caused this trend, but it is indisputable that infotainment and commercialization are closely related. Infotainment, a mix of information with entertainment, has been a growing trend in television news across the globe Thussu (2007a) identifies this trend as *global infotainment* and defines it as “the globalization of a US-style ratings-driven television journalism which privileges privatized soft news – about celebrities, crime, corruption and violence – and presents it as a form of spectacle, at the expense of news about political, civic and public affairs” (p. 8). Thussu argues that globalization of infotainment is detectable across the world; television news has been turning toward infotainment, that is, soft news, news about giant private corporations, news about lifestyle, and consumer journalism have grown in prevalence, at the cost of the public sphere and public journalism. Even conflict and wars are portrayed in an entertaining manner, by drawing on Hollywood story-telling style and therefore legitimizing a neo-imperial ideology predicated on the superiority of free-market democracy. Thus, Thussu says infotainment has become a global trend, and that this trend is a mask for neo-liberal imperialism led by the US.

During the first section of data collected, the main headlines and focus stories of *The Asia Journal, Good Morning, China* and *China News Live* were all about Taiwan’s former leader Chen Shui-bian’s graft charges and his family members’ related graft offenses. In fact, this news story was reported with in-depth coverage continually for the entire data collection period. On December 29th’s *China News Live*, the coverage of Chen Shui-bian and his family’s corruption occupied 24 minutes out of a 50 minute program. Chen’s case from the very beginning was as entertaining as a TV drama.
The characters in this real-life “drama” are the first former leader to face criminal prosecution, the First Lady living in the wheelchair, a dentist daughter and a surgeon son-in-law, and a lawyer son and a pianist daughter-in-law. Everyone in the former leader’s family utilized interesting means to embezzle unbelievable amounts of money, then created even more interesting ways to deny and avoid accusations. These facts, and the fact that several other government officials were discovered during the court case to be involved in illegal acts, encouraged highly dramatic coverage of the issue. This is arguably a case of Meyer and Hincham’s (2002) “theatricalization” of politics. Another example was offered by Chen Shui-bian himself when he allegedly staged his own shooting at a pre-election rally in an effort to win sympathy and re-election in 2004. For this event, Phoenix also ran continuous coverage.

Phoenix devotes much of its airtime to Chen Shui-bian in Taiwan because it has a mission to connect three regions of Greater China (mainland, Hong Kong/Macao, and Taiwan). Another reason is what I mentioned above – Phoenix is constrained from reporting domestic news at the national level. National news is a domain reserved for China Central Television (CCTV); even local and provincial televisions networks in China that cannot compete with CCTV are discouraged from covering national news. Local and provincial TV networks can rely on news in their own areas, but this advantage does not apply to Phoenix, because it is a pan-China TV network. Therefore, Phoenix has to take advantage of its non-state medium status to fill its airtime by focusing on stories from Taiwan. The last but definitely not the least reason Phoenix focused on the former Taiwanese leader is that what Chen and his family did was newsworthy. The construction of news is strongly influenced by news value, a concept proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1981) and reworked by other media theorists such as Watson (2003) and Branston and Stafford (2006). One of the important criteria that determine whether an event has
news value or not is elite-orientation; that is, elite people, institutions, and societies probably have wider symbolic value and thus “make good stories” (Casey et al., 2008, p. 186). Chen, a former lawyer and politician, alongside his son and daughter, definitely meets the criterion for “elite.” The facts that Chen and his family were important people and allegedly committed interesting crimes, and the fact that this all occurred outside of Mainland China, likely led to Phoenix’s decision to emphasize the story at length.

Besides focusing on interesting stories about elites, Phoenix also gives high priority to soft news, such as entertainment stars’ scandals or sensational news. The continuous coverage on Sakai Noriko’s court trial for possessing illegal drugs is a good example of this tendency. A television network like Phoenix, which is proud of its InfoNews service, would not normally headline entertainment news everyday. Nevertheless, its major news programs do always end with soft news pieces. For example, Good Morning, China on December 29th, 2009 ended with reports about a woman in California who gave birth to a record-weight baby and a beautiful beach in Phuket, Thailand.

When covering the East Asian Games in Hong Kong, Phoenix dedicated a lot of time to star athletes like Liu Xiang and Guo Jingjing. Liu Xiang, a Chinese male 110-meter hurdler, won the first ever men’s track and field gold medal for China, or any other Asian country, in the 2004 Olympic games. Guo Jingjing is a Chinese female diver who has won more Olympic medals than other female divers. Both Liu and Guo have a much higher profile in the media than other Olympic medal winners do. This is especially true for Guo, who to some extent could be considered as an entertainment star because she has been well-noticed for her relationship with the grandson of the late Hong Kong business tycoon Henry Fok in recent years. For these two star athletes, Phoenix described their activities during the time of East Asian Game in Hong
Kong with specific details, including their arrivals at Hong Kong airport, their entourages, and even their outfits. Ironically their performance in the sporting games only received one or two sentences of coverage.

In addition to selecting soft news, Phoenix is also good at making “hard news” soft. Xie Zhenhua, the Environment Minister of China and the head of Chinese delegation to Global Climate Change Conference, was forbidden to enter the conference site due to technical problems. Both The Asia Journal and China News Live gave priority to this dramatic news story over the process of the actual conference, indicating a preference by Phoenix for covering specific people rather than governmental proceedings. In fact, Good Morning, China has a segment right after the main headlines in which serious news events are reinterpreted using caricatures.

Elite Orientation

Lloyd (2004) observes that in most countries, people who watch a lot of television are usually information-poor, for too much airtime on TV networks in Western countries is dedicated to entertainment. This observation probably does not apply to viewers of Phoenix, which has long sought to provide information to, and only to, its target audience. This target audience consists of affluent urban residents in China and could be considered a beneficiary of China’s reform and open-up policy. They are well-educated, with purchasing power and extra money to invest, and tend to be concerned with global and domestic finance. This group of people arguably constitutes the emerging middle class or neo-middle class in China, who are identified with profession; monthly income; consumption and lifestyle; and subjective identity, and there are just over 35 million people in China who meet all four criteria (Xin, 2004).

For Western companies, the emerging middle class in China signifies a large and still
growing market of those with enough disposable income to make discretionary purchases, ranging from brand name shampoo, to a widescreen television, to a luxury purchase of a new Lexus sedan. For investors, the middle class signifies those Chinese with their own capital to invest – a phenomenon that is heating stock markets around the world.

To attract advertisers aimed at these people, Phoenix has to cater to what the audience’s interests are. Phoenix provides the information its audiences seek in entertaining ways. According to Zhao (2008), Phoenix is the most influential and commercially successful “foreign-invested television operator reaching the elite Chinese news and current affairs market” (p.161).

In Phoenix’s major new magazine report programs, such as Good Morning, China, The Asia Journal and China News Live, there are specific segments for finance and stock market information. Good Morning, China has a segment called “Morning Financial News” that covers the previous night's closing on New York stock markets and early reports on European exchanges. The segment of “Compass of Stock Market” on China News Live covers stock markets of ShangHai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong. “Financial News” on The Asia Journal reports the significant financial events that have influence on stock market, future market, and/or currency exchange rates. In addition to financial segments in major news programs, Financial Journal (Jinshi Caijing) is a signature financial news program that is aired Monday through Friday on Phoenix.

Phoenix Satellite TV also feature weekly financial discussion and analysis programs, including Shiqiping’s Comments on Finance (Shiping Dacaijing), a weekly in-depth financial commentary program; and New Fortune Report (XinCaifu Baogao), a weekly program produced in collaboration with the Shenzhen Stock market.

Thussu (2007a) points out that, for television financial journalism, the boundaries
between financial news and financial data have been blurred. Financial news and data are both carried on the same TV screen, which consequently becomes a “sea of information formed and framed by transnational corporation interest” (p. 65). Phoenix’s financial news programs are not exceptions to this trend. Considerable airtime is dedicated to stock market information. Corporate news is given high priority on Phoenix’s financial shows, as are “infotaining” financial scandals.

Howard Ho, a high executive of Phoenix, in an interview with Curtin (2007) said that Phoenix has proved to their advertisers that its audiences are affluent and socially influential. Indeed, according to statistics given by Zhao (2008), income from Mainland China had accounted for 75-80% of Phoenix TV’s total advertising revenue of 1 billion HKD, making it the fourth largest Mandarin television network, just behind CCTV, Beijing TV, and Shanghai TV. It is worth noting that CCTV, Beijing TV, and Shanghai TV can reach 90% of the population while Phoenix’s penetration is only 18% – despite this great discrepancy in audience sizes, Phoenix is still highly successful at obtaining advertising revenue.

With affluent urban residents with high income and high education levels as its target audience, Phoenix’s commercial purpose is obvious. Most people in this category live in cities and eastern areas of China. Therefore, by attempting to reach these audiences, Phoenix Satellite TV invoked both “a locality (eastern, cosmopolitan) and a temporality (innovative, modern)” (Curtin, 2007, p.210). There is rural population of 800 million in China and they are less well-served by the media. In the case of Phoenix, moreover, they are also completely excluded. The positioning of Phoenix’s desired audience discriminates in favor of certain groups: urban as opposed to rural; affluent as opposed to poor.

Global Coverage, Infotainment and Elite-orientation, all at Once: How does Phoenix make it?
Just one sentence is sufficient to answer this question: Phoenix succeeds with the help of international media conglomerates. Most modern major international conglomerates are in the United States. As I mentioned above, Phoenix has live studios in major metropolises like London, Moscow, New York, and Tokyo. Most of their anchors have “global background”, which means they either have studied on overseas campuses or worked in overseas institutions or companies. It is undeniable that these two factors have helped increase the quality of Phoenix’s global news reports. However, the most important factor in Phoenix’s success is that the network relies on transnational conglomerates for news materials. With its affiliation with Rupert Murdoch, Phoenix can use Fox News for content. The US-based Associated Press (AP) and UK-based Reuters are two other major sources for news, and, as Straubhaar (2007) points out, the US is still dominant in the export of international news. Reuters is the biggest financial information provider in the world and the AP claims that to be “the essential global news network” (www.aptn.com).

Thussu (2007a) describes how the AP and Reuters provide news materials to TV networks around the world:

Their feeds are sent, both with ready scripts to allow immediate broadcasting, or with natural sound which can be re-edited with local voice-covers. Broadcasting materials – news, photos, graphics, audio and video – is supplied to news organizations worldwide in English and other major international languages, while subscribers translate news agency stories into many more languages. (p. 64)

Thussu argues that these two news agencies and other US-led media conglomerates define the global flow of audio-visual news materials; thus, they have great influence on television journalism around the world.
Discussion

Television in China has transitioned from Maoist propaganda, to a commercialized and marketized profit-seeking – yet party-controlled – media environment. The biggest target market of Phoenix is Mainland China, where Phoenix is constrained in what it can cover. However the network has developed ways to survive. Constrained in reporting national news, Phoenix, as a medium from Hong Kong and with the Chinese Speaking World as its target area, has to turn to news in regions beyond Mainland China. Moreover, to stand out sufficiently enough to attract audiences, Phoenix has had to exceed CCTV in coverage of news in these areas. While CCTV only has one correspondent assigned to metropolises such as London, Paris, Tokyo, and Moscow, Phoenix has established live broadcast studios there. When reporting the Global Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Demark, CCTV had to rely on second-hand materials sold by the AP and Reuters, but Phoenix had a group of reporters who covered the conference live from various perspectives.

Another way to survive in the paradox of media-control and benefits-seeking is, arguably, to utilize infotainment. Phoenix is a medium born in Hong Kong, without any investment from the government. For this reason, direct censorship from the Communist Party does not apply to them. Nevertheless, Phoenix autonomously observes the censorship of the Party, arguably for the sake of maintaining a presence in the Chinese media market under control of the Party (a situation that remains true even in the post-WTO era). Phoenix has hard-hitting news but also takes care not to step beyond the Party’s ideological boundaries. It openly admits that it has a team in Shenzhen to review its programs to make sure that they meet the Party’s general censorship standards (Chan, 2009). Phoenix’s friendly gestures toward the Party have paid off, as evidenced by government officials’ showing support for the network. The former Prime Minister
Zhu Rongji asked the staff to give special attention to Phoenix’s star anchor – and Vice President of the InfoNews Channel – Sara Wu during a government press conference, and he said he liked Wu’s programs. This was the first time a national leader expressed a preference for a correspondent or specific news medium. Hu Jingtao, the President of the People Republic of China, when being interviewed by Phoenix Satellite TV in the site of the Sichuan earthquake in May, 2008, expressed his confidence in Phoenix’s credibility and popularity. In a report in Epoch Times, Wu Guoguang, from university of Victoria, was asked why Phoenix does not have Cantonese service even though it is based on Hongkong, a Cantonese-speaking area. Wu answered by saying the majority of the people in China have lost their confidence and interest in China’s state media. “Overseas” media, meaning media located outside Mainland China are considered by most Chinese citizens to be credible than those within the mainland. For this reason, the government now has to use “overseas media” – like Phoenix – to spread its political propaganda (Zhou, 2005). With the return of Hong Kong to China, Phoenix should not really be considered as an “overseas” medium. Nevertheless, the identity of Phoenix as a Hong Kong TV station has never changed, and Phoenix wishes to maintain this more-credible identity. While Phoenix does have some programs especially about Hong Kong, such as the Cantonese language news program Talk about Hong Kong (Xiangguang Hua Nizhi), it is in the network’s best interest to keep both an “overseas” identity and present news in the language spoken by its core audience. By doing these things, Phoenix is able to gain advertising dollars and also keep the good favor of Party officials.

Although it holds close links to the Communist Party, Phoenix, as a commercial venture, is very aware that propaganda from the Party does not generate revenue (Chan, 2003). Moreover, Phoenix as a non-state medium is constrained by the government to only be able to report on
national and political news in China. Thus, it uses entertaining, soft, and apolitical news such as stock market info and corporate news to feed his audience. For Thussu (2007a), this is the Murdochization of television news, which sacrifices public interest for profit. Although when compared against the entire Chinese population, Phoenix’s target audience is quite small, given the social and financial status of this group, Phoenix as the channel of choice for much of China's new elite perhaps does more to shape its political views than the Party's media outlets (Pan, 2005). I agree with Bandurski (2006) that commercialization-with-liberalization has spun Chinese media into a dangerous vortex. Under this circumstance, Chinese media act as “Party-Publicity Inc.” – “a quasi-business that seeks profits and to legitimate and propagandize the ruling Communist Party mandate by promoting its image” (Lee, He & Huang, 2006, cited in Thussu, 2007a, p. 78).

News programs have significant social and political influences, but this does not mean non-news programs should is unimportant. After all, the prime channel of Phoenix, Phoenix Chinese Channel, offers a variety of programs, including documentaries, TV drama, fashion programs, and talk shows. In what follows, I am concerned with content, formats, and scheduling of non-news programs.

Non- News Programs

Except Phoenix Movie Channel and InfoNews, all Phoenix channels are multi-genre channels. In what follows, I analyze the content, formats, and scheduling of non-news programs, seeking to find how global neo-liberalism has shaped the programming of Phoenix.

**Categorization and Overview of Non-news Programs of Phoenix**

Raymond Williams (1974), through analyzing programs on five BBC channels, divides TV programs into 12 types: (1) News and Public Affairs, (2) Features and Documentaries, (3)
Education, (4) Arts and Music, (5) Children’s Programs, (6) Drama, (7) Movies, (8) General Entertainment, (9) Sport, (6) Religion, (10) Internal Publicity (a channels’ promotion and presentation of its own programs), and (12) Commercials. Although the total number of television programs has increased dramatically since the 1970s, this basic categorization is still applicable to programs on Phoenix and other TV networks in the 21st century.

Phoenix, on its official website, classifies its major programs into six types. In addition to the news and information programs and financial news programs I analyzed in the previous section, there are: (1) Talk Shows and Interviews: four programs in this category all are signature programs of Phoenix; (2) Discussion and Comment programs: in this category, Phoenix lists eleven programs in which the comments and critiques of current affairs are presented in different formats, either in talk shows, or in debating shows; (3) History and Culture programs: there are twelve programs in this category, most of which are about Chinese culture and history; (4) Social Issues programs: these deal with striking and sensational social issues that are absent in Mainland China news; and (5) Entertainment and Fashion programs: in this category, there are entertainment news programs, lifestyle programs, and programs about fashion and technology.

Phoenix does not carry children’s programs, educational programs, or religious programs although some history and culture programs are on Buddhism, President Liu Changle’s religion. Only Movies are shown on Phoenix Movie Channel. There is one program that is not included into the above categorization: Phoenix Theatre (Fenghuang Juchang), a program broadcasting TV dramas on Chinese Channel.
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<th>Types</th>
<th>Programs</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>News and Current Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Asia Journal (Shishi Zhitong Che)</td>
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<td>China News Live (Huawen Da Zhibo)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Good Morning, China (Fenghuang Zaobanche)</td>
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<td>12:00 pm News Express (Fenghuang Wuqian Tekuai)</td>
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<td>From Phoenix to the World (Fenghuang Quanqiu Lianxian)</td>
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<td>Phoenix Info Billboard (Fenghuang Zixun Bang)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Net the World (Tianxia Bei Wangluo)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Talk Shows and Interviews</strong></td>
<td>A Date with Luyu: Tell Me You Story (Luyu Youyue: Shuochu Ni de Gushi)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Star Face (Mingren Mianduimian)</td>
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<td>Behind the Headlines with Wentao (Qiangqiang Sanrenxing)</td>
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<td>China A&amp;Q (Wenda Shenzhou)</td>
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<td>Fengyun Duihua</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion and Comments</strong></td>
<td>Tiger Talk (Yihu Yixitan)</td>
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<td>Hacker Zhao (Haike Zhaoshaokang)</td>
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<td>Sisy’s News (Jiema Chen Wenzian)</td>
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<td>News Talk (Shihsi Kaijiang)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Military Report (Junqing Guanchashi)</td>
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<td>Discussion of News on Today (Xinwen Jinritan)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Easy Time Easy News (Shishi Bianlunhui)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Chief Editor’s Time (Zongbianji Shijian)</td>
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<td>China Highlight News (Shishi Liangliangdian)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zhanhai International Reports (Zhenhai Tingfenlu)</td>
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<td>Taiwan Weekly Points (Taiwan Yizhou Zhongdian)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>History and Culture</strong></td>
<td>8-minute Reading (Kaijuan Bafenzhong)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Flying China (Tengfei Zhongguo)</td>
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<td>The Panoramic Eyeshot of Phoenix (Fenghuang Daxhiye)</td>
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<td>Shiji Dajiangtang</td>
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<td>Good Citizen (Fengfan Daguomin)</td>
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<td>National Grand Theatre (Dajuyuan Lingjuli )</td>
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<td>Grand Garden of Culture (Wenhua Daguanyuan)</td>
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<td>Dream of the World (Zhumeng Tianxia)</td>
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<td>China Memory (Zhongguo Jiyi)</td>
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<td>My Chinese Heart (Wo de Zhongguoxin)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Card of China (Zhongguo Mingpian)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Memory of Southern Canton(Nanyue Jishi)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enter EXPO (Zoujin Shibohui)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Issues programs</strong></td>
<td>Social Visibility (Shehui Nengjiangdu)</td>
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<td>Llife (Lengnuan Rensheng)</td>
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<td>Wentao Pai’an</td>
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<td>Wangpai Dafangsong</td>
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<td>Jinri Kanshijie</td>
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<td>The Correspondents’ Re-report (Jizhe Zaibaogao)</td>
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<td>Zoudu Dazhonghua (Read China)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fashion and Entertainment</strong></td>
<td>Trendy Guide (Wanquan Shishang Shouce)</td>
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Formats of Infotainment

Formats are likely to be confused with television genres. Although both refer to how and in what forms content is presented, they are separate concepts. Simply speaking, formats are more specific than genres (Straubhaar, 2007). Moran (1998) defines television format as a set of invariable elements in a program based on which variable elements are put together to make each episode. Moran (2004) further argues that format has meaning because of what it permits, facilitates, and implies rather than what it is. Genre, on the other hand, is usually perceived to be a type or kind of programs. For example, a news program is a genre, while a news talk show is a format to present news. The genre approach in television studies is in the process of losing its relevance as an academic analysis tool given that the classification of genres has grown more and more difficult due to the proliferation of television forms and channels (Casey et al. 2008).

Unlike the decreasing number of genre studies, research on formats has attracted more and more academic attention in recent years as a consequence of increased format trade and imitation.

According to Hoskins and Mirus (1998), cultural discount would apply if programs are exported to other countries, because viewers may not possess the necessary cultural background or knowledge to understand and enjoy international programs as much as the programs’ native viewers. Usually people tend to enjoy or feel comfortable with local stars, and are more interested in local themes. Given this assumption, Straubhaar (1991), in his theory of cultural proximity, argues that people would prefer the programs in their own language and culture if given choices. Therefore, local broadcasters prefer format adapted programs over original ones.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>programs</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Entertainment Whirlwind (Yule Dafengbao)</em></td>
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<td><em>Beauty Kitchen (Meinv Sifangcai)</em></td>
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<td><em>New Concept of Health (Jiankang Xingainian)</em></td>
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<td><em>Phoenix Aerostation (Fenghuang Taikongzhan)</em></td>
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Table 4.1 Phoenix’s Major Programs (phtv.ifeng.com)
Consequently, in recent years, the global flows of television has shifted from content flows to format flows because the adaption of formats is a convenient way to increase or diversify local and national production (Straubhaar, 2007). Phoenix is responsible for adapting some successful TV formats from those of the US or Europe.

Hartley (2001) summarizes six successful television infotainment formats: (1) lifestyle programs, including those on cooking, gardening, house improvement, and antiques; (2) reality shows; (3) tabloid programs, such as consumer stories, celebrities, and scandals; (4) investigative programs; (5) talk shows; and (6) animal shows. All of these formats are present on Chinese TV screens.

*Talk shows*

Probably the talk show is the most dominant format on Phoenix. Talk shows, as a genre, can be subdivided into celebrity talk shows and confessional talks show, both of which originated in the United States. According to Shattuc (2001), the celebrity talk show focuses on entertainment celebrities, mostly actors and singers, but sometimes politicians, authors, and average people who catch public attention due to certain events. Since its start, the format has remained the same: the stage is decorated like a living room with a desk for the host and a couch for the guest, the host opens with a monologue, a set of interviews and performances with guests follows, and a live audience watches. The confessional talk show refers to shows in which private feelings and experiences are bared to the public. The *Oprah Winfrey* is the most famous of this type.

Phoenix’s signature talk shows include *A Date with Luyu: Tell Me Your Story (Luyu Youyue: Shuochu Nide Gushi)* and *Star Face (Mingren Mianduimian)*. These two programs are representative of confessional talk shows and celebrity talk shows, respectively.
A Date with Luyu is a confessional talk show and arguably is the most popular and most successful talk show on Phoenix. It was launched in 2002 as a weekly program. In 2005, due to its high popularity, it became a daily program. The show imitates several elements of format from The Oprah Winfrey Show, including the mission of the program, the principle of guest selections, and the atmosphere of self-disclosure. On the English website of Phoenix, A Date with Luyu is introduced as

Among interview programs in China, few provide personal insights into both the guest and the host. A Date With Lu Yu is a dynamic interview show with dynamic personalities whose backgrounds are special due to spectacular experiences or amazing achievements… Lu Yu's friendliness, wit and charm help reveal aspects that give viewers a better understanding of her guests. Developing a close rapport with them, she draws out deep-seated feelings, life objectives and not infrequently – some secrets. (ifeng.com).

A Date with Luyu even imitates Oprah’s stage layout – on both stages, a beige sofa is set against a big screen displaying the program’s logo. Also, like Oprah’s show, A Date with Luyu is shot in front of a studio audience. In fact, the host and creator of the show, Chen Luyu has been called “China's Oprah.” Other TV networks in China, such as Hunan Satellite TV, also air A Date with Luyu by buying broadcasting rights from Phoenix.

Picture 4.2: A Date with Luyu
The above two pictures reveal the similarity in stage setting of *A Date with Luyu* and *Oprah Winfrey*: similar backgrounds, similar couches. But, note the difference in space between the host and guests. Arguably the similarity and difference represent that Phoenix westernizes or modernizes its programs, but does so in a Chinese way.

*Star Face* is a celebrity talk show that airs weekly. This program has been on for over ten years, and most guests are celebrities from fields of film, TV, music, and art. *Behind the Headlines with Wentao* is a typical infotainment program broadcast on weekdays. Wentao is first name of the host: Dou Wentao. The conversation topics of this program are controversial news events that have caught public attention. Wentao and two guests talk about these events in a relaxing, chatty manner, from the down-to-the ground perspective. According to Keane, Fung, and Moran (2007), this program integrates personalities with newsmakers and “draws heavily on the interlocutory style of Larry King” (p. 31). *A Date with Luyu, Star Face, and Behind Headlines with Wentao* are signature programs on Phoenix and represent the network’s most successful endeavors into infotainment.

Another talk show program, *China A&Q (Wenda Shenzhou)*, is different from the three
China A&Q is a weekly program hosted by Sally Wu, a star hostess of Phoenix and vice president of the Phoenix InfoNews Channel. Guests on this program are usually government officers with high positions, such as the minister of a department or the governor of a province. The topics discussed most often include domestic affairs pertinent to the well-being of the people and the economic development of the country. Fengyun Duihua is another high-end talk show, and could be considered as the “international” counterpart of China A&Q. The guests of Fengyun Duihua are usually the current or former political leaders of other countries. China A&Q and Fengyun Duihua are programs of public affairs.

In addition to these four “official” talk shows listed in the category of talk show and interview programs, Phoenix also adopts the talk show format for most of their current affair programs, and even for their news programs. Borton (2004) states that Phoenix InfoNews reports news in a new way, one modeled after Western and Japanese media such as CNN, which is new to Chinese viewers. Chan (2009) says:

As television is reconfigured in China, it is beyond doubt that models from the West and Hong Kong are often source of inspiration. When China borrows from outside, it tends to appropriate what is best suited to its interests, creating a hybrid culture in the process. Pure imitation is rare, and television culture is being Westernized, regionalized, and reinvented at the same time. Parallel to this is transborder broadcasters’ need to localize their programs. (p. 35)

News-talk, pioneered by CNN, is a format that starts with the anchor’s introducing a event with a brief throw to the scene via a taped report, and then coming to a studio discussion (usually at length) about the event with one or two experts (Hartley, 2001). News Talk (Shishi Kaijiang) was the first program of current affairs that adopted this format. It has proven to be successful, as
evidenced by the considerable size of its late night audience. Phoenix also applies this format to its coverage of big events, such as the Iraq War.

Phoenix also has other forms of talk shows; that is, monologue shows featuring either Western-style standup comedy or *Pingshu*, the traditional Chinese story-telling show. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Phoenix started as an entertainment channel, with only six to seven broadcasting hours each day. When the network wanted to enter the business of news and information, it was constrained by being short of capital and experienced staff. To counteract these contraints, it originated a format wherein a hostess “talks about” news – this was the first version of *Good Morning, China*. When this show first began, its content was simply aggregated from major newspapers. Now *Good Morning, China* is a primary news magazine program with its own self-produced news content. Phoenix, however, still keeps the format of solo news-talk for a few other programs. For example, *Press Reading and Critique (You Bao Tiantian Du)* and *Wentao Pai’an*. *Press Reading and Critique* is introduced on Phoenix’s English website as “both informative and entertaining” (ifeng.com). *Wentao Pai’an* is a program of social issues that presents and discusses sensational and controversial topics.

So far, among the 57 programs listed on the homepage of Phoenix TV, 23 adopt the talk show format – either in dialogue or monologue – as its major presenting means. These 23 programs include *News Talk (Shishi Kaijiang)*, *Tiger Talk (Yihu Yixi Tan)*, *Social Visibility (Shehui Nengjiandu)*, *Flying China (Tengfei Zhongguo)*, *Decoding Wenqian (Jiema Chen Wenqian)*, *Shiqiping’s Comments on Finance (Shiping Dacaijing)*, and *Xinwen Jinri Tan*. Phoenix’s reliance on the talk show format is partly based on the fact that the genre has proven to have high infotainment values. Talk shows, when compared with other formats or genres, are also inexpensive to produce. The adoption of this inexpensive genre is obviously angled toward
the network’s margin of profit. Phoenix is a commercial media entity, and talk shows enable TV networks to make profit with minimum cost. Historically, Phoenix started as an entertainment channel; in order to become a source people rely on for news/current affairs and to become a primarily information supplier for the Chinese Speaking World, Phoenix figured out the strategy of drawing on and aggregating content from other media, such as newspaper and the internet. Phoenix’s reliance on aggregated content partly explains the network’s reliance on the format of talk shows.

*Infomercial and lifestyle programs*

Since 1978, when China’s policy of reforming and opening up to the outside of the world was launched, consumer culture has been burgeoning in China. Television programs play a very important role in providing knowledge of new products and increasing people’s desire for these products. According to Xu (2007), the consumer-oriented programs in China can be divided into three types. The first are those providing viewers with the latest product information and market trends, and are usually designed for high-tech consumer items, newly-imported or would-be-imported luxury items, and new types of leisure services. The second type could be considered as a program of service which provides viewers with necessary knowledge to help them tell quality commodities from those of poor quality. The third type cultivates the “taste” of viewers and help them to “modernize” or “internationalize” their lives. The *Trendy Guide (Wanquan Shishang Shouce)* is a typical case of the first type. As a weekday program aired from Mondays to Fridays, the *Trend Guide* has different themes for different days. The programs on Mondays are about the top fashion in the world, Tuesdays are about designer furniture, Wednesdays offer the latest information of the digital products, Thursdays present the top artistic works and auction information, and Fridays are for automobiles. The program content is usually presented on the
basis of brands. For example, the episode on February 12, 2010 was about automobiles. The brand names appeared in the program included Bentley, Mazda, and Opel. The commodities introduced in the *Trendy Guide* are from world-known corporations based in the United State, Europe, Japan, or Korea. The *Trendy Guide*, in the name of providing and educating the viewers with the knowledge and the latest information needed to make purchases, is actually promoting the brands that appear in the programs. In this sense, it is also a typical example of infomercial programs that present the commercial messages in the format of information. While the term "infomercial" was originally applied only to television advertising, it is now sometimes used to refer to any video presentation that presents a significant amount of information in an actual, or perceived, attempt to persuade audiences to a point of view about certain products.

Lifestyle programs are another type of consumer-oriented program. Hartley (2001) categorizes them as a type of infotainment program. The mission of this kind of programs is usually to teach audiences about cooking, gardening, and house decorating. The Beauty Kitchen is a popular weekend program that teaches cooking. Although compared with the Trendy Guide, this program is less obvious in promoting commodities and put more stress on hands-on skills training, it also relies heavily on product placements. Phoenix is planning to launch a channel focused on lifestyle and fashion once it is permitted to by the SARFT. Assuming Phoenix’s bid to launch this channel is successful, we can probably anticipate it being a showcase for West-based, world-famous brands.

The second type of consumer-oriented program in Xu’s (2007) categorization – those that provide viewers with the knowledge necessary to tell good quality products from those of bad quality. The Economic Channel of China Central Television has a couple of programs to reveal the low-quality commodity manufacturers and provide their audience with knowledge. But this
type of programs are missing from Phoenix’s repertoire. Additionally, there are no children’s programs, education programs, or religion programs.

Other programs

*Panoramic Eye shot of Phoenix* is a documentary series launched in 2004. It is a daily program that supplies comprehensive background information for and in-depth comments on current affairs. On Phoenix’s English website, this program is described as

To entertain, educate and inform audiences, Phoenix launches an innovative series of documentary programs in 2004. Entitled ‘A Panoramic Eye shot of Phoenix’, this sequence of captivating and controversial documentaries includes segments on current affairs, historical anniversaries and exclusive insider views on present situations. Focused, in-depth, coherent and compact, these riveting documentaries serve to appeal to and enlighten the minds of a broad range of viewers. Programs will document the past, investigate the present and anticipate the future (ifeng.com).

Although Phoenix does not stated that the program’s format is copied from another source, *Panoramic Eye shot* is quite similar to *Panorama*, a signature program launched by BBC in 1953, in both format and principle of theme selections.

For the Social Issues category, Phoenix tends to utilize an investigative journalism format, such as with the shows *Social Visibility (Shehui Nengjiadu)*, and *Correspondents’ Report (Jizhe Zaibaogao)*. These programs usually feature real stories about people in conflict with irresponsible and uncaring governmental officials or police. However, any criticism focuses on local or municipal levels and does not question the higher level of provinces, regions, or the central government.

*Naming of programs and star making strategy*
Many of Phoenix’s shows are named after their host or hostess’s name. Cases of this naming strategy include *Xiaoli Eyes on China, A Date with Luyu, and Behind Headlines with Wentao*. Xiaoli, Luyu, and Wentao are popular hosts or hostesses on the Phoenix network. They can even be said to represent Phoenix to a large extent, because when talking about the hosts, people immediately think about Phoenix. To name programs after them is a tactic of Phoenix’s Star Strategy. At first, Phoenix applied the Star Strategy to Xiaoli (Sara) Wu, Dou Wentao, Chen Luyu, and Xu Gehui. Phoenix tailor-made programs to maximize on these hosts’ charisma, and then named the programs after them. This strategy has been successful for Phoenix, for each of these programs have gained large audiences.

Phoenix has since continued this strategy to create shows for more hosts and hostesses. It is worth noting that when promoting their hosts and hostesses, Phoenix is keen to emphasize their global background as well as their roots in Greater China area. In this sense, their hosts and hostesses represent Phoenix itself, which seeks to cover China but does so with a more “international” ideology.

The success of the Star Strategy has been widely promoted and complimented in China as Phoenix’s original creation. However, like Chan (2003) points out, Chinese audience, when given the chance to travel abroad, would find what they thought was original or creative in China is actually the norm in the West – as in, the Star Strategy is unique in China to Phoenix, but actually originated in Hollywood and has been widely adopted in the TV industry of the United States. The most famous cases of this strategy being utilized would be the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Larry King Live*.

*Scheduling Analysis*

Raymond Williams (1974) proposes the term *flow* to describe how TV channels or
networks hold their audience from program to program, or from one segment of a program to the next. By flow, Williams means television programs are not separate textual units. They are designed to be a sequence of juxtaposed textual elements that include programs and advertisements, as well as images and feelings the audience hopefully receive. Williams says, “This phenomenon, of planned flow, is then perhaps the defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form” (p. 86). The business point of flow is to maintain audience attention toward a given channel in a competitive television environment. Thus, flow encompasses planned program schedules, which are designed to hold on to audiences and, at the same time, by competitive scheduling practices, to discourage those audiences from visiting other channels, especially if those channels belong to a different corporate parent.

The business implication of flow scheduling is obvious. Scheduling acts as a bridge between audiences and advertisers: “scheduling delivers programmers to audiences when they are most likely to want to watch them; and audiences to advertisers in the composition that makes their advertising most likely to be effective” (Ellis, 2000, p. 29). Therefore, a wisely planned schedule could help broadcasters make benefit by attracting the right audience at the right time. However, scheduling is not all decided by the broadcasters. Sometimes, scheduling decisions are limited by government regulations that mandate when they have to show some programs and when they can show other programs. For example, every TV network in Mainland China, no matter if it is provincial or local, is required to dedicate their 7:00 -7:35 pm time slot to the Network News (Xinwen Lianbo)\(^1\) of China Central Television. This obligation, however, does not apply to Phoenix, because it is not owned by the government.

\(^1\) So far there is no uniform translation of Xinwen Lianbo. China Central Television does not offer an official English translation for the title of this program, either. “Xinwen” is the Chinese word for “news,” and Lianbo means every station with the Chinese Television network broadcasts it simultaneously. Thus, I translate it as “Network News.” Other translations include News Bulletin (Dong & Shi, 2007), Evening News (Hong, Lu, & Zou, 2009), News Report (Pugsley & Gao, 2007), and News Broadcast (Zhao, 1999).
Ellis (2000) argues that there is a cultural force embedded in TV scheduling. First, the schedule “provides the balance for genres” (p. 33) and levels of cost across a channel; that is, the schedule provide advertisers with differently-priced access to audiences. Second, scheduling also counteracts competition in a national market. Third, scheduling provides the future with a reference of the past activities and present hopes. For a comprehensive channel that shows multiple genres of programming, scheduling is central position in the creative process, for it intersects with channel brand identity. Also, the sum total of schedules defines the characteristics of a national broadcasting market. To see this from the international perspective, “the character of the national scheduling battle constitutes a formidable site of resistance and resilience in the face of many globalizing tendencies that might be down upon it” (p. 36). The cultural significance of an imported program will likely alter if put in different time slot. Haven (2007) draws from Ellis’ argument to prove the power relation between Hungary and Western countries through analyzing how TV networks in Hungary schedule imported programs. Imported programs are becoming more and more rare on Chinese TV, for improved technology has made production of original programming easier and less expensive. But analysis of schedules can still disclose the social, economic, and cultural implications of TV networks. In what follows, I analyze the scheduling strategies of Phoenix, as well as the social and economic implications of those strategies.

Phoenix, as a medium launched by private investment and based in a non-Mainland China area, is not officially restricted by the Chinese government’s scheduling regulations. For example, it does not have to carry the CCTV’s Network News at 7:00 pm. In fact, the Phoenix Chinese Channel put Phoenix Theatre, a program airing TV dramas, at the 7:00 pm timeslot, the first hour of prime time. This scheduling choice was meant to cater to the masses and increase
advertising revenue (Zhao, 2008). Most TV dramas showed on Phoenix are imported from other countries, in most cases from South Korea, because Korean dramas have grown in popularity with Chinese audience in recent years. The Phoenix InfoNews channel carries *China News Live*, its exclusive news magazine program, at 7:00 pm, in direct competition with Network News. Except for a half hour TV drama on Phoenix’s Chinese Channel, Phoenix’s channels’ prime time are primarily scheduled for news, information, and current affairs programs. On weekdays on the Chinese Channel, the news comment and discussion programs are scheduled right after Phoenix Theatre. These programs include *China Highlight News (Shishi Liangliangdian)* on Monday, *Decoding Wenqian (Jiema Chenwenqian)* on Tuesday, *Zhenhai Tingfenlu* on Wednesday, *Shiqiping’s Comments on Finance (Shiping Dacaijing)* on Thursday, and *Hacker Zhao (Haike Zhaoshaokang)* on Friday. Phoenix groups these programs under the theme of Fenghuang Guantianxia, which translates to “Phoenix Views the World.” The time slot before *The Asia Journal*, the primary news magazine program at 9:00 pm, is the *Trendy Guide*, the Infomercial program promoting the modern lifestyle with commodities by the world-famous brand names. This weekday program is scheduled at 8:35 pm. *From Phoenix to the World (Fenghuang Quanqiu Lianxian)*, a news program stressing global coverage, is placed at 10:30 pm to cater late-night audiences. In addition to *China News Live* at 7:00 pm, Phoenix’s InfoNews channel also airs the following news programs: *Phoenix Focus News (Fenghuang Jiaodian Xinwen)* at 8:00 pm; *Vane of Stock Markets (Gushi Fengxiangbiao)*, a program presenting and anticipating the trend of major stock markets in the world, at 8:30 pm; *The Chief Editor’s Time (Zongbianji Shijian)*, a daily comment and discussion program, at 10:00 pm; and *Discussion of Today’s News (Xinwen Jinritan)*, another news comment and discussion program, at 10:30 pm.

As Ellis (2000) states, “[t]he schedule is the locus of power in television, the mechanism
whereby demographic speculations are tuned into a viewing experience. And it is more than that as well, for any schedule contains the distillation of the past history of a channel, of national broadcasting as a whole, and of the particular habits of national life” (p. 26). Phoenix places news and current programs at evening and late-night, because for its target audience generally prefers to watch these shows during the evening. Stacking news and current affairs programs together is helpful to sweep the audience from one program to the next, similar program. This stacking, “flow” strategy is a useful technique to encourage audiences to stay on a single channel. Additionally, Phoenix offers short programs lasting from two to five minutes, such as Phoenix Express (Fegnhuang Kuaibao), a two-minute news bulletin scheduled at 8:00 pm, 10:00 pm and 11:00 pm to debrief the audience the headline news of the day, and Flying China (Tengfei Zhongguo), a single-person talk show program on the development of New China. Phoenix adopts these short programs to bridge the major and popular programs, and to keep audience’s interest throughout the scheduled programming.

Phoenix has also created several successful morning programs. In 1998, Phoenix launched a morning news program called Good Morning, China, in which the hostess Chen Luyu (also the hostess of A Date with Luyu) talked about news the show’s producers aggregated from major newspapers. This program eventually became a “real” news program with self-produced news content, and also proved that television news could also be successful during the morning. Although in Western countries such as the United States, television stations started round-the-clock broadcasting as early as when TV screens were still black and white (Williams, 1974), no morning shows were offered in China before 1998. Because of this, the Chinese consider morning news programs as another innovation developed by Phoenix, and Phoenix promotes relevant channels and programs as evidence of its “innovation.” The purpose of this study is not
to prove if Phoenix is responsible for the innovation of morning news programs. What matters more for the mission of this study is what Havens (2007) points out: “as news scheduling innovation develop, they can profoundly alter a nation’s or a region’s acquisition profile” (p. 221). The Economic Channel of China Central Television, inspired by Phoenix’s Good Morning, China, launched its own morning news program The First Moment (Diyi Shijian), which has also been successful in gaining a high viewership.

Advertisements

Most television networks do not list commercials in their schedules. In other words, they do not consider commercials as programs, and probably neither do audiences. However, Raymond Williams’ (1974) categorization of television programs includes commercials and publicity. Woods (2004) similarly includes advertisements as a category of television programs. Advertisements try to make products known to audiences and encourage those audiences to eventually buy the products. They are aired in time spots that are usually calculated with seconds – rather than minutes or hours – and are usually grouped together in segments. Fiske (1987) points out TV commercials are not only about products, but also images of desire and pleasure that can overwhelm the product they are attracted to. In the general evolution of advertising during the 20th century, there has been a shift from focusing on the specific features of products, in terms of how useful they are to potential customers, to focusing on the ways in which ownership of the products will enhance customers’ sense of self-worth, identity, attractiveness to others, and lifestyle. Williams (1980) argues similarly “that the material object being sold is never enough” (p. 185). In addition to selling products, advertisements also aim at deferral of reference with the products, meaning they conjure up a sense of the world through “magical inducement and satisfactions” (p. 185). Thussu (2007a) argues that commercials usher in
associations of Western modernity related to the range of products and services that are shown and the corporations that produce them. Thus, since commercials occupy air time, have direct economic influence on the media’s survival and development, and possess social and cultural impacts, any project investigating a television network cannot be comprehensive without also examining commercials.

Raymond Williams (1974) places a channel’s promotion and preview of its own programs into a category named publicity, different from commercials. In this project, however, publicity is perceived to be on par with commercials, because the purpose of publicity is to attract audiences, and in turn to attract revenue. Thus, for a commercial TV network like Phoenix, although its publicity does not make revenue directly, its ultimate goal is not different from that of commercials.

As in the rest of the world, the survival and expansion of television and other media in modern-day China would not be possible without advertising revenue. Driven by the fast growth of China economy and strong domestic consuming power, China’s advertising industry is keeping a fast tempo. In 2007, the market volume of the Chinese advertising industry reached 174.1 billion RMB (approximately 21.3 billion USD at the current exchange rate). The size of the advertising industry in 2008 was 15% bigger than in 2007. Mainland China is a huge advertising market. Because of this, advertising revenue in 2010 is expected to reach 201.6 billion RMB, about equal to 29 billion USD, which accounts for 0.78 percent of China’s total GDP. This amount is still a small fraction of the amount of money spent on advertising in the US, which constitutes one-third of global media advertising market (i.e., in 2007, total advertising expenditure in the US was $279 billion USD, and of that $150 billion was spent on media; this total expenditure was 2% of the total US GDP). However, to take the history of
advertising in the People’s Republic of China into consideration, there were no advertisement at all until 1979. With this in mind, the current size of the Chinese advertising market is miraculous. Thussu (2007a) points out that television if one of fastest growing advertising media globally, especially with the proliferation television channels across the world and the growing acceptance across the globe of new digital and mobile delivery means. Therefore, advertisements promoting transnational corporations are omnipresent on television screens worldwide – although most of these are, of course, adapted to local languages and cultures.

Regular Advertisements

“Regular” advertising refers to the advertisements that air between TV programs, as well as those that interrupt TV programs. The major news programs of Phoenix share a similar structure to TV news magazine; that is, each program is made up of several segments. For example, *The Asia Journal* has eight segments of “Headlines,” “Comments on Current Affairs,” “International News,” “Financial News,” “Cross Taiwan Straight,” “Focus on Hong Kong and Macau,” “Science and Technology,” and “Glance at the World.”

This segmentation of news programming allows for a variety of news stories to be presented in a clear and organized way, and, perhaps more importantly, this structure creates advertising opportunities during the program. For example, between two segments of *The Asia Journal*, there are two minutes of commercials. Thus, ten to twelve minutes of the forty-five-minute program are occupied by commercials. *Good Morning, China* has a similar structure, and includes between ten an twelve minutes of commercials within a one-hour program. *China News Live* has a slightly different structure, in that it contains only two commercial breaks, but also has an equivalent number of commercials.

During the five-hour prime time programming block from 7:00 pm to 12:00 am on
December 29, 2008, the time for regular commercials between and within programs was 50 minutes on Phoenix Chinese Channel and 55 minutes on InfoNews Channel. This means that nearly one-fifth of all content on these channels on that date was made up entirely of commercials and self-promotion.

Sponsorship

Many programs on the Phoenix networks feature title sponsorship, meaning corporations have agreed to financially support the programs in exchange for their name getting attached to the name of a designated program. There are two kinds of title sponsors. One is Solo Sponsor, which means a sponsor is the exclusive sponsor of the program. For example, *Good Morning, China (Fenghuang Zaobanche)*’s current full official title is *Baisha Fenghuang Zaobanche*. Baisha is a brand name of tobacco made by Hunan Tobacco Corporation. *Shishi Kaijiang (News Talk)*, a current affairs commentary program, at present is officially named *Honghe Shishi Kaijiang*. Honghe is another brand name of tobacco made by Yunnan Honghe Group. Phoenix also applies this sponsorship to segments within programs. For example, “Sanyi Focus on Hong Kong and Macau” and “Meide Comments on Current Affairs” are both segments on *The Asia Journal*.

The other form of title sponsorship is Associated Sponsor, wherein two companies sponsor a program jointly. For example, *From Phoenix to the World* is jointly sponsored by Shuangxi Culture and Communication Co. Ltd. and Fenglu Aluminum Industry. To date, all programs on Phoenix are title sponsored. This strategy is very useful for Phoenix, for title sponsorship brings revenue to the network but does not occupy air time.

Other formats of sponsorship Phoenix adopts include sponsor tags which “run right after the sponsored program. They run at different times of the day and throughout the week prior to
the broadcast. The sponsor tags feature client's logo on screen for a maximum of five seconds with a voice-over in Mandarin that specifies the sponsor's name” (ifeng.com). Another similar strategy is the use of opening and closing credit titles, which appear at the beginning/closing of a program. These feature a client's logo for a maximum of five seconds with a voice-over. For example: “XX (Program Name) is brought to you by XX” (ifeng.com). Alternatively, during breaks between programs and regular commercials, there are break bumpers that appear before commercials to form a smooth transition between the program and the advertising break. If sponsored, these break bumpers feature a client’s logo for approximately three seconds, but no voice-overs (ifeng.com).

Clients

According to Xu (2007), many in the middle class in China distinguish themselves from the masses by identifying with international consumer trends and youth culture. Thus, international investors have increasingly looked to this segment of the Chinese population because of its purchasing power and its growing interest in cars, tourism, education, and entertainment. This is especially important for Phoenix, whose advertising clients are in the fields of alcohol, tobacco, automobiles, jewelry, banks and financial products, food and other life products, electronic appliances, medicine, power and heavy mechanics, culture and communication, and tourism.

During this study’s second round of data collection, The Asia Journal featured automobile advertisements from Volvo, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi. Most of the financial products Phoenix promotes are credit cards. Phoenix also encourages tourism, with advertisements for cities such as Kunming and Dalian. Tobacco advertisement is banned in China, so Phoenix never crosses the line by airing tobacco advertisements. However, more than
one program on Phoenix’s networks is “title sponsored” by tobacco companies. Examples are *Baisha Fenghuang Zaoban Che (Good Morning China)* and *Honghe Shishi Kaijiang (News Talk)*. Both Baisha and Honghe are brand names of tobacco in China. Other title sponsored programs include *Huiyuan Juice Weather Forecast*. Huiyuan juice is a brand in China owned by Coca-Cola.

Thusssu (2007a) argues that a “Western,” especially “Anglo-American stamp is very visible on global advertising conglomerates” (p. 56). Given that their plethora of affiliates and subsidiaries around the world, these advertisers have spread the neo-liberal agenda by localizing their advertisements using national language and cultural codes. However, compared with what “nationality” the advertised commodities are, the ideology embedded in advertisements arguably matters more. According to Carter and Steiner (2004), the commercial nature of media products provides a systematic way for images of the “modern lifestyle” to circulate among viewers, creating “mirrors of reality” (p. 20). Through television, the symbolic values of consumer items, especially those available only to a few, become regenerated, highlighted, and magnified.

Discussion

Despite using a logo meaning harmony, I see tension from programs of Phoenix: the tension between global and Chinese interests, the tension between revenue making and public service, and the tension between Party-control and profit seeking. I also see how Phoenix weights these conflicts in a paradoxical environment. Phoenix’s reliance on the content and format of infotainment and its emphasis on the “global and international” – as well the fact that it offers no education or children’s programs – reveal the answer.

This chapter looked at what characteristics news programs on Phoenix have, and what implication these characteristics carry for audiences, society, and the television industry of the
Phoenix has successfully balanced comprehensive news coverage of China with not criticizing the central government (Dong & Shi, 2007). On June 16, 2009, the World Brand Lab issued *China’s 500 Most Valuable Brands* of 2009. Phoenix was ranked 38 among these 500 brands, marking the sixth time for Phoenix to be included in such a list. And now Phoenix is a standard in Chinese TV industry, against which the competition is compared. In the Chinese TV industry, Phoenix serves as a standard of success. In the next chapter, I situate my analysis in the entire Chinese TV industry by focusing on two leading networks – Hunan TV and CCTV. The purpose of this is to discover how the Chinese TV industry as a whole has balanced between global neo-liberalism and party control, as well as to examine what role Phoenix has played in the general trend of neo-liberal globalization in the Chinese TV industry.
CHAPTER 5
SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE OR SIMILARITY IN DIFFERENCE
PHOENIX, HUNAN SATELLITE TV, AND CCTV

Phoenix TV, as a TV station born in Hong Kong with no initial investment from the government, is definitely unique when compared to TV stations in Mainland China. This is unsurprising; however, with Mainland China as its primary target area, Phoenix should have some similarities with other Chinese TV networks. In the previous chapter, I analyze the programming of Phoenix, including its content, program formats, and scheduling, and find that neo-liberalism and partisanship in favor of the Chinese Community Party stand alongside each other in the programming of Phoenix. In what follows, I shift the analysis to the Chinese television industry in general. I select two leading television networks in China: the China Central Television, with primary attention to its News Channel, and Hunan Satellite TV. Through analysis of the programming of these two television networks and comparison of these to Phoenix’s programming strategies, I seek to answer to what extent the programming strategies manifested by Phoenix are different from or similar to the strategies of other leading popular TV stations in Mainland China. I also examine what influence Phoenix has had on the Chinese Television industry.

Phoenix Satellite TV and China Central Television (CCTV)

Overview of CCTV and CCTV News Channel

China Central Television (CCTV) is the only national TV network in China. It started as a Beijing TV station and, according to Hong, Lu, and Zou (2009), functioned as the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party from 1958 to the late 1970s. Since 1978, CCTV has experienced numerous changes in organizational structure, financial resources, programming
When CCTV started in 1958, it only had one channel; it would be thirty years before the network added another channel in 1988. However, during the time between 1988 and 2004, the number of channels CCTV owns increased from two to sixteen. Now CCTV owns seventeen channels: the Comprehensive Channel (CCTV 1), the Economy Channel (CCTV 2), the Art and Entertainment Channel (CCTV 3), the International Channel in Chinese-Mandarin (CCTV 4), the Sports Channel (CCTV 5), the Movie Channel (CCTV 6), the Military and Agricultural Channel (CCTV 7), the Channel of TV drama (CCTV 8), the International Channel in English (CCTV 9), the Channel of Science and Education (CCTV 10), the Chinese Opera Channel (CCTV 11), the Channel of Society and Law (CCTV 12), the News Channel (CCTV 13), the Children’s Channel, the Music Channel, a Spanish Channel, and a French Channel. With these seventeen channels, according to Hong, Lu, and Zou (2009), CCTV becomes one of the largest, most powerful, and the most influential television system in the world. Altogether, these channels reach 94.4% of the population in China. In China, 650 million viewers, approximately half of the Chinese population, watch CCTV each day. Additionally, CCTV 4, the International Channel in Chinese, is received in 10 million households across the globe, and CCTV 9, the International Channel in English, is received in 40 million. With extraordinarily extensive coverage in China, alongside increasing expansion worldwide, CCTV has become a potentially powerful player in global television arena.

CCTV News was launched in May, 2003 as the thirteenth channel of this giant TV network. Dong and Shi (2007) summarized several factors that contributed to the advent of this 24/7 news channel. First, there was increased dissatisfaction of audience with the previous news structure, in which news staff failed to cover emergencies in timely and transparent way. Second,
there was viewer dissatisfaction with propaganda stories flooding in news programs. The most
direct incentive for launching CCTV News, arguably, is Phoenix InfoNews’ timely,
encompassing, and in-depth coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Phoenix’s success in coverage
of 9/11 significantly increased its popularity and credibility among viewers. This consequently
prompted the launch of CCTV News Channel, which had been under consideration by the
Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for ten years (Dong & Shi, 2007). Within one month after it
launched, CCTV News Channel was available in every single province in China. The slogan of
CCTV News is “to keep the same pace with the world, to walk together with the times.”
CCTV’s intent for starting the news channel was to achieve a reputation as a world-class
broadcaster and to expand its media territory in the world (Dong & Shi, 2007). Indeed, it is
surprising that the first 24/7 news station in China, home of one-fifth of the world’s population,
only began in 2003.

CCTV News Channel broadcasts programs of news and current affairs throughout the
day. The programs cover national affairs, finance and business, culture, sports, and international
issues and affairs. The Network News (Xinwen Lianbo) is CCTV’s major news program at 7:00
pm, and usually lasts thirty minutes. This program has topped the news-program ratings
nationwide, according to Hong, Lu, and Zou (2009). Also, it arguably is the most important news
program in Mainland China. As I mentioned above, TV networks at every level in Mainland
China have to carry this program simultaneously with CCTV News Channel, and it is the only
news program simulcast at every level. Other major programs on CCTV News include Morning
News (Zhaowen Tianxia) at 6:00 am, News 30’ (Xinwen 30 fen) at noon, and News 1+1 (Xinwen
1+1) at 9:00 pm. All of these programs are presented on CCTV 1. As a 24/7 news channel,
CCTV News also carries current affairs and news commentary programs, such as Focus
Interview (Jiaodian Fangtan), Focus on (Gongtong Guanzhu), Oriental Horizon (Dongfang Shikong), and People in the News (Xinwen Huiketing). Also, CCTV News has several news programs dedicated to international issues and affairs, such as World Express (Guoji Shixun), an international news program, and Global Watch (Huanqiu Shixian), a program of commentary on current affairs. Before the launch of CCTV News, most news and current affair programs were produced by CCTV 1.

Since the News Channel started, CCTV 1 has also begun broadcasting programs from the other CCTV channels. In the process of marketization of the media in China, CCTV has since the mid-1990s carried out plenty of management and program adjustments. In terms of content, CCTV has strived to provide programs that appeals more to the general public and facilitates more democratic exchange between the government and the public. With respect to management, CCTV has adopted the “producer system” which is very common in Western countries. Before the “producer system,” the television production in China was managed by the Party. The relevant party organizations appointed officials to television stations of all levels, who then decided what to produce and what not to produce. The new production system, wherein the actual producers of content are in charge enables television professionals to put their talent, expertise, and ideas into practice and, in turn, increase the quality of content (Hong, Lu, & Zou, 2009). In spite of the above changes, however, CCTV is still a party propaganda apparatus (Shi, 2004, cited in Hong, Lu, & Zou, 2009). The principle reason why the Party established and supported the CCTV is for it to be a tool to guide public opinion and speak for the Party. In fact, the CCTV has made clear, both to the Party leadership and to the public that it would adhere to these principles. Li Ting, the director of CCTV News Channel, when claiming the expectations for this new channel, insisted that the news must be timely and accurate and the background of
news should be detailed and all-encompassing. At the same time, however, he also insisted that
news programs should be directed toward the “official mainstream ideology” (CCTV Internal
Daily Reporters, 2003-2004, cited in Dong & Shi, 2007). Of course, the CCTV is not the only
media organization that made such an acclamation. In fact, all media institutions in Mainland
China are required to behave in the same way.

The adherence to the ideology of the Party is expressed in CCTV’s major news programs.
The Network News has a strictly format. The order of the news content is usually:

1. The headline and first group of new stories usually focus on either government leaders’
international and domestic visits and meeting activities, or conferences hosted by the central
government. This part usually lasts ten to fifteen minutes. Tunstall (2008) describes this first
section of Network News: “There were many lengthy and reverential shots of these men
sitting in large armchairs and listening as other elderly men in suits talked. This 7:00 pm –
7:10 pm coverage [indicates] the current party pecking order” (p. 221) (see picture 5.1).
2. The next section consists of news stories that reflect development in nation-building or
other aspects of the socialist country.
3. The third section consists of international news, and usually lasts no longer than five
minutes.

As an example, on December 29, 2008, the first thirteen minutes of the Network News
focused on President Hu Jintao’s visiting the victims of the earthquake in Sichuan. This was
followed by six minutes of coverage focusing on Vice President Li Keqiang’s visit in Kuwait
and a conference hosted by Vice President Wu Bangguo. The second cluster included news
stories about a new system for agricultural loans in Jiangsu Province, a virtual drilling system
developed by the University of National Defense, the provincial government of Hubei helping
the orange sale, and the prosperity of the New Year Movie (Hesuijian) business nationwide. Finally, international news events included the conflict between Israel and Palestine in Gaza, the anti-governmental demonstration in Thailand, and the crash of the real estate market in Britain. There is a common saying about the structure of the CCTV’s *Network News* that says “in the first ten minutes, national leaders are busy; in the second ten minutes, Chinese people are living happily; and in the last ten minutes, people in other countries are suffering.” While this is a joke among viewers, the program does tend to consistently follow this pattern.

![CCTV Network News](image)

Picture 5.1: CCTV *Network News*

The network’s adherence to the ideology of the party is also reflected in other programs. For example, the proportion of programs offered by the CCTV with any kind of critical edging has declined from 47% of CCTV’s programs in 1998 to 17.5% in 2002 (Hong, Lu, & Zou, 2009). The topic selection of the critical and investigative programs has been more and more cautious. The structure and content of *Focus Interview (Jiaodian Fangtan)* arguably constitutes convincing evidence. *Focus Interview* is a program in the mould of CBS’s 60 minutes segments...
(Dong & Shi, 2007) and airs right after *Network News* and the national weather report. Since it began in 1994, this thirteen-minute program used to be famous for its in-depth, investigative coverage of controversial social events and issues. It often used real stories about people’s conflict with bureaucratic and uncaring officials and questioned the work of governments at various levels. According to Zhao (2008), it was “CCTV’s most celebrated investigative show and arguably the most celebrated fruit of media commercialization and the highest embodiment of the Chinese media’s social conscience” (p. 88). In recent years however, due to the interference from government authorities, it has changed its topics from social problems to achievements of the Party and the central government (Zhu & Xie, 2005), the progress of socialist society, or international affairs that have nothing to do with the negative social issues in China. Since the Party under the leadership of Hu Jintao proposed a “construction of a harmonious society” ideology in 2005, and news media should be the gatekeeper of the harmonious society, the number of programs and topics of controversial social problems have greatly declined. The topic of *Focus Interview* on December 29, 2008 was the Central Conference on Agriculture, which issued a new policy which could be beneficial for China’s rural populations. The program topics in the week of December 5 to December 11, 2009 included the updated information of H1N1, the Conference of Global Climate Change, the accomplishment of Chongqing Police Department and Municipal Government in attacking gangsters in city, and the governmental achievements in web regulation. Zhu Rongji, the former Prime Minister, said that if *Focus Interview* was not going to report negative news, he would not watch it anymore (Dong & Shi, 2007) – based on the show’s coverage since that time, it is likely that Premier Zhu now stopped watching *Focus Interview*. Other in-depth programs of news or current affairs on CCTV News also avoid controversial or sensitive problems or issues. The
shows *People in the News, News 1+1, and Oriental Horizon* on December, 29, 2008 focused entirely escalating conflict between Israel and Palestine in Gaza. This meets CCTV’s requirement for topic selections of in-depth and investigative programs: “avoid triggering instability at home and providing subjects to be attacked from abroad” (Yan, 1996, quoted in Zhang, 2006, p. 731).

**Comparison of Phoenix InfoNews and CCTV News: Similarity in Difference**

Both Phoenix and CCTV’s primary target regions is Mainland China, although CCTV also broadcasts to the global Chinese-speaking Community through CCTV 9 (English service) and CCTV 4 (Chinese-language service). Contrary to Phoenix’s marginalized status, CCTV enjoys a dominant status as the national network in China. While Phoenix InfoNews Channel waited for two years to gain a market share in China, and was only granted limited access to the Guangdong Province and high-income neighborhoods and hotels of three stars or above in other provinces, CCTV News Channel achieved a hundred percent landing in Mainland China in just one month; that is, residents in every corner of China can receive it. In fact, CCTV News Channel has even privilege over other CCTV channels. For example, for national news such as foreign national leaders’ visitations to China, only CCTV News Channel is equal to the XinHua News Agency in terms of its journalists’ access – i.e., CCTV News Channel and Xinhua News Agency are the only two Chinese media institutions that can go on-site to record, interview, and report on foreign national leaders’ visits. Notwithstanding these restrictions, Phoenix constitutes a stressful competition for CCTV, and Phoenix was the truly the only competition CCTV had before the rise of provincial TV networks such as Hunan Satellite TV and Shanghai Media Group. Probably the most noticeable proof is that the success of the Phoenix InfoNews Channel served was the direct incentive for the launch of CCTV News Channel (Dong & Shi, 2007).
Phoenix and CCTV are quite different in terms of their news selection, in that CCTV is focused on (or is obligated to be focused on) national news, especially national leaders’ activities, the achievement of Socialist nation-building and Phoenix focuses much of its air time to international news. However, there are similarities in other aspects of programming.

*Urban elite-oriented programs*

For CCTV, as the national TV network of a country where 80% of population is in rural areas, it is arguably politically incorrect to claim that their target audience is urban residents. CCTV, in fact, has never claimed any specific group as its target audience. However, its programs are biased toward the urban elites as much as Phoenix. In 2002, CCTV adopted a mechanism of program elimination. With this system, the program with the lowest ratings for three seasons would be eliminated. This mechanism, according to Zhao (2008), is “a typical case of resource allocation on the basis of neo-liberal market-based truth and calculations” (p. 89). While Phoenix publically claims that their target audiences are affluent urban residents (ifeng.com), CCTV, as state-owned media institutions, never claims any specific social group as its target audiences. However, their programs, to a large extent, are biased toward the urban residents. Zhao (2008) supplies very convincing evidence about the bias of television programs in China and states the reason of this bias. For example, out of 396 critical topics of the *Focus Interview* from 1994 to 1998, 190, or 48%, were focused exclusively on urban settings. 30.1%, or 119 topics were concerned with rural issues. This ratio is highly disproportionate to China’s actual ration of urban and rural population. In China, there is a population of 1.3 billion, and 80% of this population lives in rural areas. The urban population of China tends to be treated as economically and socially superior to rural population. Another example is CCTV 7, the Military and Agricultural Channel. This channel, unlike CCTV News or CCTV 1, is not a “must carry”
channel, meaning while it is named “the Military and Agricultural Channel,” it ironically is not actually accessible in several rural areas. Also ironic is the fact that the program Agricultural News (Nongye Xinwen) was taken off the Agricultural Channel, based on the ratings-focused programming elimination policy newly adopted by the CCTV, meaning viewers tuning into learn more about agricultural information on the Agriculture Channel may have difficulty. Given that the cancelation of Agricultural News might do real damage to the provision of important development information to a still-important part of the population, to deprive that population of useful programming, even in the absence of profitability, may seem a short-sighted approach, a violation of public sphere expectations, as well as the marginalization of rural people in Chinese society. As another example, when CCTV 12 was launched in 2002, it was named “Channel of the West of China” and was meant to serve the economically less-developed western region of China. After only two years, however, it was re-launched as the Channel of Society and Law in an effort to reach the more profitable urban market. Development in China is uneven in favor of urban areas and eastern provinces and regions because residents in these areas have more potential in consumption. The change of CCTV’s programming, according to Zhao (2008), is a consequence of commercialization and “commercialization created new patterns of inclusion and exclusion in accessing the media as a source of political, economic, social, and symbolic power and led to a substantive reconfiguration of social relations within and round the Chinese Media” (p. 82).

The CCTV News Channel has a program titled Focus On (Gongtong Guanzhu), which was designed to focus on the marginalized social groups in China, meaning those people who in rural areas and those who work in cities as blue-collar labor. But Focus On is scheduled at 6:00 pm, a non-prime time slot, indicating that the CCTV News Channel is not actually very
concerned about reaching that potential audience. Programs of international news, like World Express and Global Watch, which tend to have more urbanite audiences, are scheduled during primetime. These scheduling choices indicate that the CCTV News Channel purposefully tries to reach affluent audiences in the East, rather than the majority of Chinese citizens that live in rural areas.

Of course, it is worth noting that the preference for elites is not unique to TV networks in China – profit-driven media around the world tend to favor middle class audiences who possess the most disposable income.

*News talk shows*

The 9/11 terrorist attacks not only shocked the world, but also changed China’s mediascape. Phoenix’s timely, in-depth, and comprehensive coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks prompted the birth of CCTV News Channel. Whereas Phoenix had provided the most comprehensive and in-depth news coverage, it must now compete with the government-supported CCTV News Channel for Mainland China’s audiences. The first large-scale international news story after the launch of the CCTV News Channel was the US-led invasion and occupation in Iraq in 2003. As it focused on this story, CCTV copied Phoenix’s methods for covering 9/11, which included the extensive use of news talk shows. When covering 9/11, Phoenix adopted CNN-style news talk, in which experts in relevant fields sat with anchors and provided real-time comments on both the background and updated information of the event. When the Iraq War broke out, CCTV hoped to exploit the commercial and influential potential in war coverage. For the Iraq War, CCTV used its privileged status as a national network to monopolize experts in fields of military, international affairs, studies of Middle East, etc., all in an attempt to compete with Phoenix. That is, before start of the War, CCTV booked the most
prestigious experts on its own programs, making it impossible for those guests to provide commentary for Phoenix. To deal with the monopoly of CCTV, Phoenix used their own anchors as commentators. Consequently, Phoenix used the star system which they are highly experienced in to create these anchors credible and knowledgeable commentators. Since the beginning of the Iraq War, CCTV adopted the news talk show on a large scale, to the extent that most programs of current affairs on CCTV are in the news talk format. Examples include *People in the News* (*Xinwen Huiketing*) and *News 1+1* (*Xinwen 1+1*).

It is not doubtful that Phoenix has boosted the development of TV news in China. CCTV only had 60 hours of live news coverage for the entire 2002 year. Now, the CCTV provides over 700 hours of live news annually (Dong & Shi, 2007). At the same time, however, Phoenix has also extended the West-inspired news value and Western-style journalism to Chinese television. Dong and Shi (2007) point out that the universal criteria for professional journalism come from the United States, but Phoenix has become a standard against to which professional and nonprofessional journalism in China is compared.

Phoenix Satellite TV and Hunan Satellite TV

*Overview of Hunan Satellite TV*

The development of the Chinese TV industry is partly expressed by the rise of provincial TV networks. With the advent of satellite and cable TV technologies, as well as the government’s encouragement of “decentralized” media (Zhao, 2008), there are now 31 provincial TV networks broadcasting nationwide. Hunan Satellite TV arguably is the most popular, successful, and influential. Hunan Satellite Television was formed on January 1, 1997 by consolidating Hunan Television's satellite broadcasting assets. The network is headquartered in Changsha, Hunan province. In 2000, it became the first provincial-level broadcasting
conglomerate, when Hunan Television, Hunan Economic Television, and Hunan Cable Television merged into a single unit (Zhao, 2008). On May 20, 2009, Hunan Satellite TV launched its international service – Hunan TV World, whose slogan is “Be happy Be Chinese” – to compete in overseas Chinese market, becoming the first provincial network in Mainland China to broadcast to the global Chinese community (hunantv.com). Hunan Satellite Television reaches 760 million in Mainland China, about 60 % of the entire Chinese population, and can reach a large portion of the international Chinese audience through its satellite services. In the United States, DirecTV promotes their service to Chinese audience by offering Hunan Satellite TV; interestingly, DirecTV airs this advertisement on Phoenix’s North America Channel.

Comparison of Programs of Hunan Satellite TV and Phoenix

Keane (2004) describes Hunan Satellite TV by saying, “…there was talk of a great leap forward made in programmes innovation in Hunan – the very birthplace of Mao Zedong, the great icon of the Chinese Communist revolution. Here were developments worth following. Hunan Satellite Television had staked a position as China’s most commercially savvy broadcaster and was cleverly localizing programmes from Taiwan and Hong Kong” (p. 90). In the following, I describe and analyze the programming of Hunan Satellite TV, then compare the results with Phoenix TV to explore any similarities and differences that exist between the two.

Reality show and talk show

Hunan Satellite TV is well-known for its entertainment programs. Different from Phoenix’s mission of “infotainment,” that is, to present information in a entertaining way, Hunan Satellite TV cares only about entertainment. On its website, Hunan Satellite TV proudly claims it is the first platform of entertainment in China (hunantv.com). Hunan Satellite TV’s programming is comprehensive, so it does carry news programs; however, the channel only offers three. The
first is CCTV’s *Network News*. This, as stated above, is required for every TV station in Mainland China. Hunan Satellite TV also produces and broadcasts a 30-minute program focused on local news, named *China Hunan News (Hunan Xinwen Lianbo)* at 6:30 pm, and a program of entertainment news: *Entertainment: No Limitation (Yule Wujiexian)*. Because *Entertainment: No Limitation* is an really only about entertainment news stories, it is fair to say Hunan Satellite TV only dedicates one hour of each day to news.

The rest of Hunan Satellite TV’s airtime is all about entertainment. If the news talk show is Phoenix’s favorite programming format, Hunan Satellite TV’s favorite format may be reality and reality-based competition shows. Hartley (2004) categorizes reality shows into infotainment; however, reality shows arguably are a kind of pure entertainment show, because infotainment involves both entertainment and provision of socially useful information. The latter, however, is not very visible in reality shows. In recent years, Hunan Satellite TV has launched a series of contest shows that have attracted both participants and audiences in the global Chinese-Speaking Community. *Super Girl (Chaoi Nvsheng)*, by far one of the most popular shows, is an annual national singing contest featuring average people as contestants. It can be generally described as the Mainland Chinese version of *Pop Idol* or *American Idol* and is one the most popular entertainment shows in the country. The show launched in 2004 and continued in 2005 and 2006. In 2007, the show was renamed to be *Kuaike Nansheng (Happy Boy)*, and featured only male competitors. The contest show was stopped for 2008 due to the criticism from the top authority of CCTV (Keane, Fung, & Moran, 2007) and was relaunched in 2009. The Chinese title was changed to *Kuaile Nvsheng*, which means happy girl, though the English title remains unchanged (i.e., *Super Girl*). Only female competitors were eligible to participate when the show relaunched. However, in 2010, the show was featured as *Kuaile Nansheng (Happy Boy)* again.
Regardless of who competes, the program uses the same format, involving a panel of judges, audience voting through text messaging and the Internet, and lots of advertisements. The show has been an amazing success in terms of its influence, audience size, number of participants, and revenue. In 2005, there were over 150,000 participants and 400 million viewers. The commercial rating of Hunan Satellite TV was boosted to 7,500 RMB (937 USD) per second during the show (China Today, 2006). With the success of Super Girl and Happy Boy, Hunan Satellite TV launched other contest shows, such as Beat the Mic (Tiaozhan Maikefeng) in 2008 and Flowers (Huaer Duodu) and Jiejie Gaosheng in 2010. Hunan Satellite TV tends to focus on singing-based competition shows, perhaps because it is a performance form accessible to average people. Thus, this kind of show is likely to attract the largest number of participants. Super Girl bills itself as a gala for everyone, with the slogan “sing whenever you feel like it, regardless of what you sing, how you look or where you are from” (China Today, 2006). Quite a few mainland TV stations have also produced their own contest shows, such as CCTV 2’s Dream China (Mengxiang Zhongguo), Star Sky’s the Best Dancer (Wu Zhuangyuan), and Phoenix’s Miss Chinese Cosmo Pageant (Zhonghua Xiaojie).

In addition to reality shows featuring average people as participants, Hunan Satellite TV also has airs reality shows with celebrities (mostly entertainers) as participants. These include Never Give up (Yongwangzhiqian), a celebrity reality contest show, and the famous Happy Camp (Kuaile Dabenying), a combination of talk show and game show with celebrities as participants. This show is one of Hunan Satellite TV’s flagship programs, modeled after a Hong Kong television show named All Out Mobilization for Joyfulness (Huanle Zongdongyuna), and has been extensively copied by other TV networks in China.

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2 Star Sky is a TV station, based in Hong Kong and airing in the Guangdong Province, with capital investment from Rupert Murdoch. It focuses on entertainment shows.
Hunan Satellite TV has also made dating shows popular in Mainland China. Hunan launched its first dating show, *Romantic Meeting (Meigui Zhiyue)*, in 1998. The success of this show led at least ten other provincial and local TV stations to launch their own dating shows, such as *Saturday Meeting* on Shanghai TV, *Everlasting Romance* on Beijing Cable TV, *Talking Marriage* on Hainan TV, and *Heavenly Fate* on Chongqing Satellite TV. It is worth noting here that Hunan Satellite TV’s *Romantic Meeting* copied the format of a TV dating show in Taiwan, *Special Man and Woman (Feichang Nannv)*, which was distributed to Mainland China by Phoenix TV (Tunstall, 2008).

Other types of reality shows include contest show of outdoor or wilderness survival skills, like *I am the Champion (Woshi Guanjun), Just Go (Zhiyong Da Chongguan)*, and the *Crunch (Bubu Weiying)*. Among the 27 programs listed on the Hunan Satellite TV website (hunantv.com), ten are reality shows.

Hunan Satellite TV also features several talk shows. According to Keane, Fung, and Moran (2007), the adoption of talk shows in Mainland China is largely influenced by Phoenix. Hunan Satellite TV bought and syndicated *A Date with Luyu: Tell Me Your Story (Luyu Youyue: Shuoqu Ni de Gushi)*, a signature talk show that aired on Phoenix, and renamed it *A Happy Heart: Tell Me Your Story (Kuaile Xinling: Shuoqu Ni de Gushi)* to emphasize the relaxing nature of the program. *A Date with Luyu* also has been syndicated by other eighteen TV stations in China. Hunan Satellite TV has their own self-produced talk shows, too: *Women Under the Sky (Tianxia Nvren)*, a confessional talk show focused on women; *8090*, a confessional talk show focused on youth, and *Stories Behind (Beihou de Gushi)*, a celebrity talk show. There are also finance talk shows, such as *My Special Ways (Tingwo Feichangdao)*, which teaches viewers how to make and manage money. Hunan Satellite TV produces talk shows, which Hartley (2001)
defines as “infotainment,” because they are popular with audiences in and outside of Mainland China and because they are cheap to produce (Tunstall, 2008). This means the shows can make large returns on investment. Currently, Hunan Satellite TV carries six talk shows, either syndicated from other sources or self-produced.

**TV drama**

In recent years, Korean TV dramas have also enjoyed high profiles on Phoenix and Hunan Satellite TV. On December 29, 2008 when the data of extended prime-time programs of both Hunan Satellite TV and Phoenix were recorded, Phoenix broadcasted an episode of *Single Again* and Hunan Satellite TV *A Wonderful Day*, both of which are Korean TV dramas. Phoenix only has one TV drama program, *Phoenix Theatre* (*Fenghuang Juchang*), which airs at 7:00 pm on weekdays. Hunan Satellite TV airs three TV dramas on weekdays: *Idol Theatre* (*Ouxiang Juchang*) at 7:00 am, *Happy Theatre* (*Kaixin Juchang*) at 1:30 pm, and *Golden Eagle Theatre* (*Jinying Juchang*) at 10:00 pm. Additionally, Hunan Satellite TV also has a weekend TV drama show: *Youth Theatre* (*Qingchun Juchang*). The majority of TV dramas shown by Phoenix and Hunan Satellite TV are Korean TV dramas. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the popularity of Korean pop culture has increased in China and other Asian countries. Jin (2007) analyzes the prosperity of Korean cultural industry in the framework of media imperialism and concludes that this trend is evidence of the reinforced influence of Western commercial ideology.

In addition to reality shows, talks shows, and TV dramas, Hunan Satellite TV also produces programs in infotainment formats, such as quiz and game shows like *One Beat One Hundred* (*Yiyi Dibai*) and fashion shows such as *Queen* (*Wo Shi Meiren*) targeted toward women and Men’s Style (*Fengshang Zhi Wang*) targeted toward men.

It is worth noting here that although the Hunan province has a large rural population;
Hunan Satellite TV’s programming contains no content designed specifically for rural audiences.

The following chart presents the findings of a comparison between CCTV, Hunan Satellite TV, and Phoenix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TV networks</th>
<th>Target audience</th>
<th>Programming Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix Satellite TV</td>
<td>Urban Elites</td>
<td>Elite-oriented information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Infotainment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Global coverage with emphasis on Western countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>Population nationwide</td>
<td>focus on the Party’s achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>biased toward urban residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunan Satellite TV</td>
<td>Population nationwide</td>
<td>focus on entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No programs for rural audience</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Comparison of Programming Strategies of Phoenix, CCTV, and Hunan Satellite TV

On the surface, Hunan Satellite TV, CCTV, and Phoenix are different in programming strategies. Nevertheless, there are similarities in their programming choices and biases.

Phoenix’s influence on programming of both TV networks is visible in CCTV’s choice to emphasize news talk shows and in Hunan Satellite TV’s choice to emphasize entertainment talk shows and dating shows. In other words, Phoenix was successful with presenting these content types. Although Phoenix is quite different from the other two networks, both CCTV and Hunan Satellite TV followed the content trends that led to Phoenix’s increased popularity. In what follows, I compare the advertisement strategies present on Phoenix, CCTV, and Hunan Satellite TV. Arguably, the findings of this comparison indicate that all three channels engage in similar ideological works, despite their different strategies for doing so.

The Advertisements of Phoenix, CCTV, and Hunan Satellite TV

During the five-hour extended prime time on December 29, 2008, the Phoenix InfoNews
Channel had over 55 minutes of advertising, CCTV News had over 29 minutes; and Hunan Satellite TV had over 87 minutes. The length of commercial time is a decisive benchmark of the level of commercialization; however, it arguably too arbitrary to say that CCTV is less commercialized than Phoenix and Hunan Satellite TV, or that Hunan Satellite TV is more commercialized than CCTV and Phoenix. In the context of commercialization, profit is arguably what every TV network pursues.

Since 1994, when CCTV held the first auction for commercial time in China, it has had auctions every year for clients to bid on prime-time commercial slots. In 2004, the final revenue from that year’s auction was 3.5 billion RMB (approximately 656 million USD), accounting for more than 50% of CCTV’s total revenue (Hong, Lu, & Zou, 2009). The most expensive time slot is between Network News and Focus Interview. CCTV even lists the commercials scheduled to air in this time slot in its official schedule as Commercials after the Network News (Lianbo Hou Guanggao). The director of the Advertisement Department of CCTV has the last veto power for launch or purchase of programs. Without the endorsement of the Advertisement Department, no news programs can be started or purchased. Due to CCTV’s dominant status as the only national network with one hundred percent coverage nationwide, its advertising revenue has experienced a dramatic surge upward since the beginning the new millennium. It reached 8 billion RMB (nearly 1 billion USD) in both 2003 and 2004, constituting almost a third of all the money spent on TV commercials in China (Hong, Lu, & Zou, 2009).

Hunan Satellite TV’s commercialization is evident in that it shows over 87 minutes of advertising within a 5-hour programming block. In addition, Hunan Satellite TV adopts Phoenix’s Title Sponsor advertisement program, meaning that most programs are sponsored by specific companies whose names are integrated with the program titles. For example, the full
name of *The Happy Camp (Kuaile Dabenying)* is *Oppo Real Music Cell Phone Happy Camp.* *A Happy Heart: Tell Me Your Story*, Phoenix’s *A Date with Luyu* on Hunan Satellite TV, is named *Sanquan Zhuangyuan Shuijiao Happy Heart* (Sanquan is a food company). The full name of the *Super Girl* is the *Mengniu Yorgurt Super Girl Contest*, after the company that sponsored the series. Hunan Satellite TV adopts Phoenix’s title sponsor program also shows the sponsors’ name in red on the lower right corner of TV screens throughout the length of each show (See Picture 5.2 and Picture 5.3).

As large-scale reality contest shows have increased the popularity of Hunan Satellite TV, so too have the prices to advertise on the network. According to Lu (2009), *Super Girl* taught CCTV a lesson. The price of a commercial slot during the final contest of *Super Girl* was 112,500 RMB (approximately $13,900 USD), which was higher than CCTV’s *Commercials after the Network News (Lianbo Hou Guanggao)* then-record rate of 110,000 RMB(approximately 13,600 USD).
In addition to the title sponsor program, Hunan Satellite TV also follows Phoenix TV’s Star Strategies to create brand-name hosts and hostesses. Since following this strategy, Hunan Satellite TV’s hosts and hostesses have acquired national fame and popularity through shows that were tailor-made for their talents. This increased fame is good for the hosts and hostesses, but also means more advertising and revenue is now accessible by Hunan Satellite TV.

Concluding Remarks

Just as Phoenix is different from CCTV and Hunan Satellite TV in terms of ownership, all three are different in terms of their political status. CCTV is the only network with plenty of privileges. Hunan Satellite TV is provincial but does have some national coverage. Phoenix’s status, according to Curtin (2007), is still marginal. With respect to program content, Phoenix’s emphasis is on international news, infotainment, and elite-oriented programs. CCTV, as the
ideological apparatus of the Party, carries a plethora of propagandist content. Hunan Satellite TV’s main task is entertaining people. However, with the marketization of the entire Chinese TV industry, the West-rooted neo-liberal commercialization is very evident in each of these three networks.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In previous chapters, I analyze the programming of Phoenix TV and compare the programming strategies of Phoenix with those of other two leading TV networks in China, i.e., China Central Television (CCTV) and Hunan Satellite TV. In this chapter, I summarize the findings of the above analysis and connect them to the Chinese television industry, drawing on global and domestic contexts. Also, I discuss the implication of the findings to the viability of media imperialism for the current situation of global media.

Conclusion

The first research question that this study seeks to answer is: as a Chinese media enterprise born in the era of neo-liberalism, with media liberalization as one of its characteristics but broadcasting to Mainland China – which usually is associated with tight media control on ownership and journalism – how has Phoenix balanced the competing demands of high profit-orientation, a US or neo-liberal style business model, governmental regulations, and the issues of modernization and Westernization? This study’s analysis of programming strategies, including content, formats, and scheduling, reveals three characteristics of Phoenix’s programming strategies: global coverage, infotainment, and elite-orientation. Regarding news coverage, Phoenix’s favoritism for international news is arguably not entirely autonomous. The Chinese government does not allow the company to cover domestic news at the national level, and local content does not fit Phoenix’s mission as a pan-China service. Thus, Phoenix turns to international news and current affairs to fill out its airtime, and the affiliation with Murdoch’s News Corporation provides Phoenix with advantages in global coverage. Phoenix’s emphasis on developed Western countries, especially the United States, however, is not out of governmental
control; instead it is obviously profit-driven bias, and so is its mission of infotainment and elite-orientation.

As a commercial TV network, Phoenix is aware that coverage of controversial issues attracts attention from audiences, so it has programs focusing on the wrongdoing of the lower-level of local governments – stories on which local TV stations would normally never dare to report. Phoenix never challenges high-level administrative institutions such as provincial governments, let alone central government. It also avoids national issues that may offend the authority of the Communist Party, such as Falungong, the corruption of governmental officers, and the problems of high unemployment in China (Boyd-Barrett & Xie, 2008). This is perhaps the balance that Phoenix found between the Party control and the pursuit of profit.

The purpose of comparing the programming strategies of Phoenix with CCTV and Hunan Satellite TV is to find an answer to the second research question: to what extent are the programming strategies manifested by Phoenix convergent or divergent with the strategies of other leading popular TV stations in Mainland China? What evidence is there, if any, that Phoenix has exercised an influence on the strategies of other stations?

The programming strategies of Phoenix Satellite TV, CCTV, and Hunan Satellite TV look very different on the surface. CCTV, as the apparatus of the Party, has to dedicate plenty of airtime to what the Party wants them to air. Hunan Satellite TV is an entertainment TV station, with the mission of creating the platform of entertainment in China (hunantv.com). However, there are similarities existing in difference, and the influence of Phoenix on these two leading TV networks is not hard to find. The programming choices of Hunan Satellite TV and CCTV, similar to those of Phoenix, tend to focus on content most enjoyable to urban residents. As Chan (2009) says, the appeal of the Chinese television market is based on its large size. The population
of China is four-times that of the United States and one-fifth of the entire planet. However, provided that the majority of the population live in rural areas, the economic value of the Chinese television market cannot be only equated with the size of population. The potential of the television market in China is geographically uneven, with the biggest potential in the big cities. This reflects China’s uneven development, which favors urban, intellectual, professional, and managerial classes at the expense of the Communist Party’s traditional supporters – peasants and urban workers. On top of this uneven development, Chinese TV institutions’ choices tend to reinforce the unevenness of the rural and urban areas and marginalize of the rural population in Chinese society.

Phoenix Satellite TV is responsible for popularizing the talk show on Chinese TV, as a format of entertainment, as infotainment, and as news presentation. Phoenix also accelerated the development of TV news in China. The success of Phoenix InfoNews was the direct incentive to prompt CCTV to set up its 24/7 news service (Hong, Lu, & Zou, 2009). At the same time, however, Phoenix also brought Western-style professionalism to TV journalism in China.

In addition to their programming strategies, this study also draws on the advertising strategies of three networks. In the global context of neo-liberalism that foregrounds the freedom of market and under the circumstances that subsidies from the Chinese government were no longer available, commercial media institutions such as Phoenix and the state-owned CCTV and Hunan Satellite TV had to innovate in order to make profit. Examples include Phoenix’s title sponsor, which Hunan Satellite TV cloned and exceeded by showing the sponsor’s title on the screen during the process of programs, and CCTV’s decision to auction off commercial slots in prime-time and list that period of commercial time as a scheduled program. Thus, as state-owned TV networks in a socialist country, Hunan Satellite TV and CCTV, similar to the commercially-
driven Phoenix Satellite TV, embrace the advertising, the magic system of capitalism (Williams, 1980) for survival and prosperity.

Discussion

Phoenix Satellite TV, CCTV, and Hunan Satellite TV all found their own positions of balance in the tension of the global and national in China. Probably only in this way, can they proposer in Mainland China. This tension started to take shape when Phoenix Satellite TV was permitted the limited landing in Mainland China, as the first case of entry of non-state media organization with global capital in Mainland China. This tension is a dynamic process in which China not only has been a receiver of global capital but also has endeavored to be a pro-active global player, which is well manifested with China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the hosting of Olympics in 2008. In what follows, I discuses how the tension of the global and national in Chinese TV industry is characterized by the current situation of Chinese television industry and the players’ (both domestic and global) strategies to seek the maximal shares of the big pie of Chinese media market (in both Mainland China and the global Chinese Speaking Community).

*Chinese Television Industry in Post-WTO*

*Entertainmentization: Led by neo-liberalism and pushed by governmental control*

Zhu and Berry (2009) argue that “The People’s Republic of China has embraced the market economy and joined the global market-based economic system, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other alliances and treaties have reduced protectionism within that system. As a result, both ideological and protectionist obstacles to the flow of television have decreased” (p. 3). Zhu and Berry’s evidence is that viewers in China can access Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV in addition to the national China Central Television and provincial or
municipal channels. Arguably, Zhu and Berry’s argument is not well grounded with falsifiable hypotheses or evidence that goes against their arguments; however, I have proven it with my above analysis of Phoenix’s programming strategies.

Marketization and commercialization notwithstanding, China’s media are expected to continue their role in reinforcing the party-state’s ideology. The control of the media inherently is at odds with neo-liberalism, which advocates uncontrolled, unregulated media. According to Zhu (2009), television is “the most towing the party line and making a profit at the same time” (p. 127). Chan (2003), when investigating China’s media development along the market-state axis, argues that market-state tension may reach a state of equilibrium when the Party-state can successfully accommodate the force of marketization. But this equilibrium may not last long at the market has an expansive inherent logic and the force it generates it always destabilizing especially when there are technological and external forces beyond the control of the Party-state. The state will have to make constant adjustment in order to keep the market forces under its control. Under these circumstances, the nation-state is expected to give in more to make way to marketization. (p. 161).

I am not as optimistic as Chan, and neither are media players (e.g. Murdoch, 1997) nor other scholars (e.g. Lee, 2003; Zhao, 2008). So far, in the tension between the global capital and the party-state’s control, what I have observed is still a compromise at the global capital’s end. Murdoch says to play in Chinese market, Western corporations must learn to abide by its distinctive social, cultural, and political values. Even China’s entry into WTO has not loosened the Party’s control over the media. Lee (2003) summarizes the Chinese media in post-WTO: “China will comply with the WTO requirement in allowing transnational companies to invest in
telecommunication infrastructure and media management. Despite the recent telecommunication bubble, lots of investment activities will be expected. However, under no circumstances will the Party relinquish its media ownership and editorial control. Nor are global media conglomerates likely to contest state ideology” (p. 24). In fact, through decentralization of the media, control has been decentralized, too (Zhao, 2008). The Party’s control over the media does not only take place in the mainland, but also in Hong Kong, where Phoenix Satellite TV is still based. Hong Kong’s return to the People’s Republic of China has inevitably brought social and political changes, even though it is allowed to keep the capitalist system under the policy of “one country, two systems.” The freedom of media in Hong Kong has more or less been shaken by intervention of the Party. In 2009, a book was published in the United State out of the taped narration of Zhao Ziyang, a former Party leader who expressed his sympathy for the students in the Tiananmen Event of 1989, and consequently had been under house arrest. The media were not allowed to report any news about Zhao or his book; in fact Phoenix Satellite TV was cut off the cable system for several days after reporting Zhao’s death. Liu Changle left a very important conference to deal with this urgent situation. Zhao’s book, which reveals embarrassing information about the Tiananmen Event, was entitled The Prisoner of the State and was published in English. There are also two Chinese translation versions of the book: one was published in Taiwan and the title was translated into Chinese literally as Guojia Qiutu, whereas another version was published in Hong Kong, and the title was changed to be The Path of Reform (Gaige Zhilu), obviously in order not to offend the authority of the Party. Of course, this book was not translated and published in Mainland China, and Chinese search engines like baidu.com and google.cn did not yield any results for searchers using the book title as a keyword phrase. When Phoenix developed in 1996, Hong Kong was considered the freest media
environment in East Asia. Once its base of operations moved to the Chinese mainland, however, the political stance of Phoenix TV inevitably had to be adjusted. This is especially true because Phoenix has always considered the mainland as its primary target for gaining audiences. Tunstall’s (2007) metaphor for the media in China is “Capitalist-Communist Media Stir-Fry,” because “while China has become in many commercial areas more capitalist than the capitalists, communism remains an important force. In China, we see media that are aggressively capitalist in their pursuit of audiences and advertising while continuing to be Marxist and communist in terms of ideology and control” (p. 191).

On one hand, indeed, more and more global conglomerates have entered into the Chinese Market; on the other hand, most of these are only allowed in the business of entertainment programs; the ideologically-loaded area of news is not open to them and will not be in the near future. In other media areas beyond broadcasting, the global conglomerates have to behave in accordance with the governmental regulations and censorship. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, when searching Zhao Ziyang’s book The Prisoner of the State (Guojia Qiutu) on the Chinese site of Google, google cn., the result was: “there was not result. The entry you searched was not in accordance with relevant law.” Google had long been not pleased with the tight censorship. In March 2010, Google shut down its server in Mainland China and connected its Chinese service to the server in Hong Kong, due to the failure in finding solutions to the dispute with the Chinese government. The case of Google is evidence that “China is enthusiastic about promoting the commercial application of new technologies, but is keen on controlling their negative political ramifications, the profit-driven global media giants are unlikely to disobey these priorities” (p.16), otherwise, they have to give up this market of China.
Lee (2003) anticipates that foreign investment in local TV will be allowed in the near future. I observe, however, that instead of directly investing in media institutions, foreign investment have been more and more interested in media content products, such as TV dramas and movies. *Ugly Wudi (Ling Wudi)*, a TV series of comedy produced by Hunan Satellite TV in the style of *Ugly Betty*, was invested by Unilever, a global corporation that owns many of the world's consumer product brands in foods, beverages, cleaning products, and personal care products. Procter & Gamble (P&G), a US-based corporation also dealing with consumer goods, will be the investor of Hunan TV’s next drama production. Based on the current regulation policies of the Chinese government, to invest in media products provides more freedom than investing in TV stations. This strategy would inevitably create another window to promote Western products in China. *Ugly Wudi* is filled up with the embedded advisements of Unilever products.

According to Moran (1998), “World television continues to be determined through a complex system of external and internal governance of nation states rather than the international activities of transnational media conglomerates. In turn, nation states have made crucial choices when it comes to organising the domestic details of their television system” (p. 7). The Party confines the foreign-invested media to entertainment. The primary purpose obviously is to protect its socialist political system. Nonetheless, there is a consequence that the authority has not realized; that is, to confine foreign-invested TV networks in entertainment has, in fact, opened the gate wider for the global capital’s penetration in Chinese media, which coincides with Washington’s agenda. Overt propaganda, after all, is not as profitable as entertainment, even though much of the entertainment propagandizes in favor of consumption. In fact, some Chinese TV networks, despite not having the same limitations as foreign-based networks,
autonomously choose to specialize in entertainment. Hunan Satellite TV uses all of its airtime on entertainment, with the exception of its required “political task” of carrying CCTV’s Network News. Thus, the enter/infotainmentization of the Chinese media industry arguably has been activated by both global neoliberal imperialism and domestic governmental control.

According to Thussu (2007a), “The trillion-dollar global entertainment and media market was predicted in 2007 to show maximum growth in the Asia-Pacific region, annually averaging about 12 percent.” (p. 161). China, as the biggest country in the Asia-Pacific region, can be expected to contribute significantly to this 12 percent.

Competitivization

Seeing horizontal competition through the evening TV gala (Dianshi Wanhui)

When considering the Chinese TV industry, one cannot ignore the evening TV gala, a TV genre far more popular in China than in other countries. In an evening TV gala, performers such as singers, dancers, and comedians, or even magicians perform live shows. I did not cover the evening TV Gala in my above analysis of TV programs because TV galas are special programs that either take place annually to celebrate New Year, Mid-Autumn, and National Day festivals, or for special purpose such as fundraising or celebrations of a national achievement. For example, after the tragic earthquake in Sichuan in 2008, CCTV, Hunan Satellite TV, Phoenix, and other TV networks hosted fund-raising galas. In 2001, TV stations in China held TV galas to support China’s successful application for to host the Olympics in Beijing.

Although evening TV galas are not regularly scheduled programs, they are indicative of the intense competition that exists in the Chinese TV. The most popular evening gala in China is the Spring Festival Gala (Chujie Lianhuan Wanhui), which is produced by the CCTV to celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year. Like Network News, the Spring Festival Gala is
simulcast by other networks, including Hunan Satellite TV. Watching CCTV’s *Spring Festival Gala* on the Chinese Lunar New Year Eve has become an accepted ritual in the celebration of this very important festival. Although Phoenix is not obligated to simulcast the Gala with CCTV and other TV networks, it nonetheless presents the Gala one day later—featuring its own advertisements rather than the ones that aired during the live performance. The performers on Gala are usually the most popular stars and the most achieved artists in China, meaning the television presentation of the festival is usually extremely popular. An interesting story occurred in 2005, at a time when the winners of Hunan TV’s *Super Girl* show were the most popular stars in China. The CCTV refused to include the *Super Girl* winners in the Gala because the success of *Super Girl* on Hunan Satellite TV had threatened the near-monopoly CCTV had held on Chinese TV audiences (Lu, 2009). And according to Keane, Fung, and Moran (2007), the success of *Super Girl* demonstrates a need for CCTV to reassert its authority in popular programming.

Since that time, Hunan Satellite TV has started airing its own version of the Spring Festival Gala. However, like Phoenix’s version, Hunan Satellite TV’s *Gala* is not a live show. CCTV monopolized the performers for the Gala, just as they monopolized expert commentators when reporting the Iraqi War. Thus, Hunan Satellite TV must record their version of the show in advance to make sure the performers are available for both the Hunan TV and CCTV’s version of the Gala.

*Vertical competition*

Chan (2009) proposes that there are three types of television players in Greater China: (1) global players, such as New Corporation and AOL Time Warner; (2) regional players focusing primarily on regional broadcasting, such as Phoenix TV; and (3) national players, such as CCTV.
However, through investigating China’s TV market, I would like to revise Chan’s classification. Chan overlooks another important type: big provincial satellite television companies. In 2008, there were over thirty provincial satellite TV stations in China; additionally, the influence of more than 350 local TV stations should not be ignored with.

China’s TV market can thus be divided into three tiers. The first tier is the national network. Although China Central Television is the only official national network, provincial networks with national influence such as Hunan Satellite TV and Shanghai Media Group (SMG) – as well as the pan-China networks such as Phoenix – should also be included in the first tier. Global players such as AOL or New Corporation have to work with the Chinese media institutions in this first tier to play their roles; that is, the global players are not as of yet allowed to stand alone in Mainland China. The second tier is made up of provincial TV networks. Technically there are over thirty provincial TV stations, whose coverage can reach the entire nation through satellite and cable systems. It should be noted that not all of these stations have acquired national influence like Hunan Satellite TV, but each of these could conceivably gain such influence in the future. The third tier refers to local or municipal TV stations. These are not very likely to spread out of their target local markets, but their penetration in their local regions is very high due to their coverage of local news, issues, and information – their popularity is also probably increased by their use of local dialects. Thus, the Chinese TV audience can be split into three roughly shares, between national, provincial, and local channels (Tunstall, 2007).

Since the beginning of marketization, Chinese television has had to face both external and internal competition. Competitivization, according to Boyd-Barrett (2006), together with privatization and commercialization, is an expression of neo-liberalism in the media sector. Competitivization starts with intense competition and is followed by a trend toward market
oligopoly, during which weaker competitors are either kicked out of the market or bought out by more successful players.

*Expanded Chinese TV industry*

According to Zhu and Berry (2009), in the 21st century, television is the dominant medium among all Chinese populations; consequently, the flow of programming to Chinese-speaking populations has increased. Due to the development of globalization, the flow of programming is no longer one-way. Zhao (2003), through analyzing the media coverage of China’s negotiation with the United State regarding China’s entry into the WTO, finds that globalization is not imposed only from the outside.

Needless to say, China’s endeavors to be included into the World Trade Organization represent China’s endeavor to be included into the world community – this endeavor is also expressed in the development of Chinese television. Chinese television is no longer confined to the Greater China Area; it is now a “global Phenomenon” (Zhu & Berry, 2009, p. 3). Successful TV networks in China have begun to expand their influence to the world. Phoenix has already acquired an established market in global Chinese Community through its Channel of North America and Phoenix Chinese News and Entertainment (CNE) in Europe. Through such media, Phoenix has reached over 150 countries in the world. Similarly, CCTV has Chinese (CCTV 9), English services (CCTV 4), Spanish, and French channels in overseas markets. Hunan TV started its own international service in 2009, when it launched Hunan TV World. It is probable that the majority of consumers of international Chinese television services are Chinese or Chinese-speakers. However, China’s influence can be conveyed to the world beyond the Chinese-speaking world by way of personal interactions or other means. As Lee (2009) argues, “China’s media transmit nationalistic, anti-American, anti-Western rhetoric and beyond.
National is, in a sense, anti-global. On the other hand, they glorify global events such as WTO membership and the Olympics sponsorship as monumental ‘national achievements.’ In this case, global is national, national is global” (p. 24-25).

In addition to expanding the market to areas beyond the Greater China Area, TV institutions in China started to penetrate the world in other fields of media. For example, in 2009, Hunan TV and CCTV launched Web TV services: imgo.tv and cntv.cn, respectively. Web TV, in China, used to be dominated by private enterprises that would provide access to the Internet but could not produce content. The participation of state-owned TV networks, with rights and advantages in content production, however, will likely change the current landscape of Web TV market in China (Xie & Huang, 2010).

Globalization, Neo Liberal Media Imperialism, and Hybridity

Globalization is a major theoretical frame in global media studies. The word of globalization has become a part of everyday vocabulary and arguably has had the highest profile in corporate slogans. According to Shim (2006), there are three strains of globalization discourse: (1) globalization as an outgrowth of cultural imperialism (Schiller, 1969, 2976) as the consequence of New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) discussion; (2) globalization as an outcome of modernity (Gidden, 1991); and (3) globalization discourse that identify cultural hybridity and investigating power relations between periphery and center from critical perspectives (Kraidy, 2005). In the process of hybridization, globalization, in fact, encourages local people to rediscover the “local” that they have forgotten when they are moving towards Western-imposed modernization (Featherstone, 1993). According to Chadha and
Kavoori (2000, cited in Shim, 2006), in “Asian tiger economics,” the process of hybridity means embracing and utilizing the new glocal economic situation to strengthen their growth routes; thus, in the transnational context where periphery and center meet, hybridity reveals itself in new practices of cultural expression. Shim (2006) points out that hybridity is not merely a descriptive device. It is a communicative practice constituting and constituted by the political economic relations.

Hybridity arguably is one of Phoenix’s tactics to distinguish it from its competitors. According to Curtin (2007), Phoenix Satellite TV positions itself within a dominant framework of Chineseness and at the same time tries to invoke a cosmopolitan gloss. Thus, the Chinese elements are not invisible in the programming content or even formats of Phoenix Satellite TV. For example, Wentao Pai’an, a program of social affair critique, adopts the form of Pingshu: a traditional Chinese Story-telling form. Also, plenty of programs in the category of History and Culture are named after China, like Flying China (Tengfei Zhongguo), China Memory (Zhongguo Jiyi), and The Card of China (Zhongguo Mingpian). Of course, the content of the above programs are various aspects of China. The Flying China is a solo talk show hosted by He Liangliang who, in each episode, narrates the economic achievements and political progress China has made since 1978. The China Memory is an interview talk show where the hostess and the guest talk about the historic events in China. Other programs, although are not named after China, are primarily about China. The Panoramic Eyeshot of Phoenix (Fenghuang Daxhiye), the signature documentary series of Phoenix, also focuses on in-depth coverage and reflection of historic events or people.

Nevertheless, it is not well-grounded to consider the hybridity of program content or

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3 The Four Asian Tigers are the highly developed economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. These regions were the first newly industrialized regions, noted for maintaining exceptionally high growth rates and rapid industrialization between the early 1960s and 1990s.
formats as sufficient evidence that the influence from Western media can be counterbalanced with local power. In fact, the power relation of the West, with the US at the core, and the rest still exists in the form of dominance from the former to the latter, and the hybridity which arguably make the programs most attractive for local audience who live in the era of globalization could boost the dominant influence from the West, instead of counterbalancing it with local culture or power.

*Media Imperialism Thesis Revisited*

From Cultural (Schiller, 1965, 1992) to Media (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, 1998), and to Neo-liberalism (Thuss, 2007a), the Imperialism thesis has moved gradually beyond media content.

Boyd-Barrett (2008) argues that media is much more than content. International media studies and other related fields may need to also pay attention to the operation model, hardware, format, and advertising involved in media production, all of which tell the other side of story that content per se cannot tell. Boyd-Barrett (2008) says that

Excessive weight is given to media imports and exports and rather too little weight to other relevant variables including what the imported, exported or domestic products are actually *about*, and the sources of enterprise finance and of advertising on which they depend. In the spirit of Adorno, we might consider the export of telenovelas from countries of the South as rather less significant than the US invention and worldwide export of the institution of advertising-supported junk entertainment. (p.203)

McChesney (2001) points out that the best way to understand how closely the global commercial media system is linked to the neoliberal global capitalist economy is to consider the role of advertising. Advertising is a business expense incurred by the largest firms in the economy. The commercial media system is the necessary transmission medium for businesses to
market their wares across the world; indeed, globalization as we know it could not exist without it. Straubhaar (2007) points out that global trends in advertising originated from the U. S. advertising industry, which created a prototype of organization, models for media ads, and a general model of how advertising could fit into an industry and a consumer society. U. S. ads prototypes have been diffused worldwide. Thussu (2007a) proposes the term “Neo-liberal” Imperialism. To spread neo-liberalism worldwide, television and television news play an important role in shaping the ideology of neo-imperialism through neo-liberalism with the mark of media privatization, commercialization and liberalization.

Tomlinson (1991) and Thompson (1995) harshly criticize media and cultural imperialism by charging that it overlooks the complexities of receiving cultures and so doubts (ignores?) the existence of imperialism. The findings of this study suggest that the central question of imperialism and its relationship to media has to do with the ways in which media content and media format relate to, support or fail to support, the trajectory of imperialism in any of its manifestations. This study answers Lee (2003)’s call for “historically informed research” (p. 25) that takes into consideration the interaction between global and national factors to assess the impact of global investment on Chinese media sectors. This study considers how global market-driven neo-liberalism interacts with the national factor of governmental regulations in Chinese Television and concludes: regardless of the party-state’s motivations for embracing neo-liberalism – be it done reluctantly, or purposefully designed with the intention of using capitalism to save socialism – the US-inspired and -rooted neo-liberalism has become a dominant ideology in the Chinese TV industry.

Suggestions for Future Research
Phoenix Satellite TV, as a non-state media organization in the Chinese Speaking World and a major information and entertainment source in this important geo-linguistic community, merits more academic attention. In terms of methods, this study primarily adopts the qualitative approaches to analyze programming strategies and advertising strategies of Phoenix Satellite TV and compare them with those of China Central Television (CCTV) and Hunan Satellite TV. Unfortunately, there is no published quantitative analysis of Phoenix Satellite TV so far. In the future, therefore, scholars may adopt quantitative approaches to explore the programs and other aspects of Phoenix Satellite TV.

The limitation of this study is that how audience accept and consider Phoenix is not touched upon; thus, I suggest that scholars conduct surveys among audience with the hope to find how Phoenix Satellite TV has been generally perceived by TV viewers. And through audience research, we also can find in what way the media imperialism from the Western countries has influenced on peoples’ attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Another possibility for the future research could be how Phoenix Satellite TV, as well as other TV networks in China has converged with new media. At the current era of converging media when each media industry does not exist in isolation anymore, the issues of how old media face the new media arguably should be replaced by how old media converge with new media. Hunan Satellite TV and CCTV started their web TV services and launched the corresponding software applications in 2009. Phoenix Satellite TV has an online forum on ifeng.com where the viewpoints of the audience are collected and integrated into program content. Also, the hosts and hostess of Phoenix run personal blogs on ifeng.com. The media convergence is a dynamic process. Phoenix, Hunan Satellite TV, CCTV, as well as other networks may adopt further and different strategies in the future. To explore how these
traditional TV networks converge with new media and what the specific converging strategies imply for both TV industry and new media industry arguably would yield significant and meaningful results.
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