

**THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY
PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT: STRUGGLING
TO BALANCE CONTROL AND PROGRESS**

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Executive Summary

1. The ubiquitous control that the Chinese Communist Party in general and the Department of Propaganda (DOP) in particular exert over the media has always been a major preoccupation of observers and critics. Yet, this focus tends to overlook the complex and dynamic changes that have occurred on the media scene over the years.
2. Across China, the intense market competition has forced various media players to devise products that sell rather than what is officially sanctioned. To outdo each other, these media players sometimes infringe reporting parameters set by the DOP and government bodies that oversee the media.
3. There also appears to be more public attention on individuals who take advantage of various media platforms to air their views and highlight instances of the high-handed behavior of propaganda and government officials. The DOP finds itself coming under the limelight for the way it conducts its affairs which is usually based on fiat and fear.
4. The availability of convenient and easily available media platforms like cellphones and the Internet have empowered individuals with the means to access and exchange information by bypassing official censors. They are also able to maximize their reach and achieve a greater impact with lesser effort.
5. A clampdown on negative news is no longer possible and has in fact become less acceptable to the public. Greater interaction with the outside world has made the public more well-informed and even raised their expectations. They expect the DOP and government media bodies to act fairly, responsibly and within the law when dealing with individuals that flout reporting parameters.
6. The propaganda and publication authorities will need to meet this expectation to avoid losing more credibility in the eyes of the public, consequently affecting the overall image and legitimacy of the Party and government.

7. In any progressive society, the demands for greater democracy and better protection of individual rights constitute an irrevocable trend. As China marches towards modernity and its much touted goal of a harmonious society, the DOP and government media authorities, however reluctant, will have to make the necessary adjustments to stay relevant.