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### **From Natural Disaster and Social Crisis to Great Success of the Olympic Games: Transparent Governance and Foreign Correspondents in China in 2008**

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# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This research aims at taking an in-depth and revealing look at the media policy altering events that happened in China in 2008 and the impact these events had on the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Chinese authorities' attitude towards the media, especially international press, greatly changed as the country dealt with Beijing Olympics, natural disasters and social crisis.

Studying the interplay of media and politics in China can be tough, as its billions of citizens are mobilized in various ways through the mass media every day, and researching Chinese audiences is too ambitious a project to be viable. What is surprising, however, is that the viewers in their billions are always directed by the media according to the party's ideology. It is impossible to believe that governing China with ideology can be based on a very scientific research of media effects and audiences, using statistics and mathematical calculations. This cannot be how the Chinese Communist Party governs [Bishop, 1989: 5]. The Internet is a big driving force to change the entire "middle kingdom" politically, since news is no longer created only by the official Party Organ and mouth-piece Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily and CCTV. Anyone among the nearly 1 billion mobile phone users in China could be the fastest journalist to cover any sudden emergency at every corner of the country. With a population of 460,000,000 Internet users, the party and government in China are facing the toughest challenge ever to maintain consensus and stability for its carefully defined "Harmonious Society." Transparent government is not a new term in China any more. Promoted by the party and the central government, political transparency is provided with great efforts to meet the challenge of the time.

The Internet and new media has changed Chinese authorities' handling of Chinese and foreign press, but it was the 2008 Beijing Olympics that truly changed the theory and practice of the Chinese government and the CCP dealing with crisis in front of domestic and international media.

The 2008 Olympic Game in Beijing is a significant driving force for all of these to happen. The challenge is from an even more aggressive way. The party and government in China

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are not only requested by the Chinese *Netizens* to be transparent, but also by those from outside the national borders. Foreign correspondents in China compared their very different experiences before, during and after the Olympic Games, and some of them are so pleased to see the revolutionary changes towards a more transparent and accountable political environment for the people.

Ever since China won the bid to host the 2008 Olympics, the debate had always been how the Chinese government would handle the media, especially foreign press, considering the many restrictions that existed then. Moreover, in 2008 China was hit with many crises, which influenced dramatic changes in government and CCP's communication policies. It is in this regard that the research intends to answer:

- *What influenced the change in China's treatment of media before the 2008 Beijing Olympics?*
- *How did the Chinese government and CCP's attitudes towards international media change before, during and after the Olympics?*
- *What lessons did the Chinese government and CCP learn in terms of communicating to the public during a series of crises in 2008?*
- *Are the changes that happened in 2008 sustainable, and what are the political and ideological implications?*

This research paper explores the compromises that the Chinese government made to allow some level of freedom for foreign correspondents before and during the Olympics and what prompted the decision to make the changes permanent after the Games. This paper brings to light the challenges that Chinese government officials faced to implement a media policy they were ill prepared for and how they overcame the challenges. The paper will also provide insight into the plans that the government made to change local officials' attitudes towards foreign correspondents after the Olympics and the progress that has been recorded up to date. In this paper an effort has been made to investigate how prominent foreign reporters in China reacted to the change in policy and the frustrations they have been facing following resistance to change by some party and government officials at the local levels. The paper also provides what foreign correspondents are hoping for in future from the government as they continue to report about China.

This research paper is important because it is one of the first efforts made to understand the circumstances that led to China's change in stance on foreign correspondents, and it reveals a picture of what is in store for foreign reporters covering China. It is one of a few academic glimpses into the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign correspondents. The information unearthed through this research will help other

media researchers and academicians to understand the status quo and have a direction in their quest to dig more about this issue or improve on the work already done. Though China has been open to the world for over three decades, there is still a lot that people do not know about the country and how it is governed. It is still a mystery how some policies are made and implemented and what effects they have on the government, the party and the rest of the 1.3 billion Chinese people. This paper provides vital information that paves the path to discerning China and its relationship with foreign correspondents.

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We have experienced an age of powerful news from all over the world.

What major functions do the mass media perform in society? Political scientist Harold Lasswell [1969], a pioneer in media studies, mentions:

- *surveillance of the world to report ongoing events*
- *interpretation of the meaning of events*
- *socialization of individuals into their cultural settings*

Political communications scholar Doris Graber [2002] argues that a fourth function should be added, which would be the deliberate manipulation of politics.

It is believed that the media have a major impact on the conduct of politics and on public thinking. Politicians throughout the world act and behave on the basis of this assumption including the leaders in China.

It has been a historical tradition in China that media and communication sectors are used as the most important forces in acquiring the power and maintaining the power by the Communist Party. Chairman Mao's theory has always guided the party state that all media organizations in China should be mouth-piece of the party and the government. This was extremely successful for nearly 30 years until the end of Cultural Revolution in late 1970s. While the principle is still in the theory nowadays, in a more practical sense, the party and government's ultimate control of the media became impossible when new media technology and other driving forces arrived in China.

## **Media and Politics in China before 2008**

The media in China has always been under the control of the communist party and the Chinese government ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. At the time of becoming a republic China had borrowed its style of governing from Russia, then known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or simply the Soviet Union. In the soviet governing style the media was state controlled, existing to advance the interests of the single ruling party and the government. This style of governing gave rise to a combination of two theories, the Soviet-Totalitarian Theory (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). The theory falls under the four normative theories of the press developed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm. The other three being Authoritarian, Libertarian and Social Responsibility theories. The four theories were borne of observation and not the social sciences method of research where there is

testing of hypothesis and replication. Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) describe the Soviet-Totalitarian Theory as where the press's sole reason of existence is to contribute to the success and the continuance of the soviet system. The media is controlled by the economic and political actions of the government as well as by surveillance and its only loyal members of the party that are allowed regular use of the media.

For years in China, the meaning of being a journalist has been very different from the West. Journalists in China are necessarily elites in many ways, especially if they work for the giant national media organizations. It is always hard to get in through the severe competitions and even harder to maintain successful lines in their career. It is regarded as a very political career since major national media's journalists are automatically cadres of the party and government. Welfare packages for the official journalists are as good as those civil servants working in the government offices. Free housing and medical care were provided for free for journalists until the early 1990s. Many journalists of the early time could be more appropriately described as "publicist." Their most prioritized responsibility was to distribute the information to mass audiences with supervision of the party. The entire system was tightly controlled by every level of the party committee's department of publicity and communications. For example, the CCP's Central Department of Publicity has the right to nominate and appoint presidents and CEOs of all national media organizations as well as ministers of regulating government offices including the State Administration of Press and Publications (SAPP), State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), State Council Information Office (SCIO) and Ministry of Culture. Xinhua News Agency is the only high-level official news agency of the national government and no other media organizations will be given better access to the top decision-making circle than Xinhua. Every time there is a crucial and sensitive event, all official media will routinely wait for Xinhua's official statement and then cover the news with directives of the appropriate level's party publicity department. At the national level, the so-called "ministerial level" media organizations including People's Daily Group, Xinhua, China Central Television (CCTV), National People's Radio (NPR), China Radio International (CRI), Economic Daily and Guangming Daily, are collaborating with each other to maintain a collective and powerful network of managing positive image and reputation of the party and government and portray a prosperous society with sustainable economic growth.

The above system worked so well since the party's early establishment in the Red Capital of Yanan and then in the People's Republic of China since 1949. Newspaper and magazines were the dominant media formats and the system was very stable even during the very crazy 10 years of the Cultural Revolution. However, new media

technology from simple television, live radio and television, to the Internet gradually entered the scene. These strongly challenged the existing system and most of the media- and politics-related terms in China were nearly all revised dramatically.

When television became a popular new medium in China, investigative journalism was introduced with support of the new leaders and CCTV was among the first national media organizations to cover corruptions of officials in China. Mr. Zhang Changming, executive vice president of CCTV, was then a reporter to cover officials of the Beijing government to use city council cars for private purposes including driving the family for shopping before the Chinese New Year holidays in 1978. It was a very successful practice of the media to stop corruptions and abuse of public assets was then carefully watched by most of the Chinese media. Party and government want to use the media to achieve certain goals, such as unearthing corruption, but do not want to have their own legitimacy undermined in the process. Since a good deal of corruption involves party and government officials, this puts journalists sometimes in a difficult position.

According Dreyer [2010], reporters have described their solution to this as "*swatting only at the flies, but not hitting tigers.*" Journalists complain that although they are urged to be a watchdog for the public, they are often used as hunting dogs to do the dirty work for one political faction seeking advantage over another. Hence, despite occasional victories, they doubt that media supervision can be used to fight corruption and fight social justice. Guo [1984] argued that television news at an early stage played an important role to scare the officials with vivid audio-visual images especially when covering the misconducts of the officials. As a new media format of the 1980s, television continued to play the role of watchdog as described as "public opinion supervision" [Zhao, 2007]. In 1993, Sun Yusheng, vice president of CCTV and then head of news and commentary, established the development in China that there should be more news programs on TV rather than entertainment and education programs. He immediately launched the first morning 60-minute news bulletin "Oriental Horizon" to provide more information of current affairs from China and abroad, as well as a series of very high quality investigative news programs in the evening, including the daily evening show, "Focus Interview" and weekly news magazine show, "News Probe." More than 50 percent of Focus Interview programs were about negative stories around the country describing the misconducts of the local officials in every aspect of the government offices.

Therefore, a great number of officials mentioned in the shows were punished after the programs. For years in Beijing, there was always a long queue of people outside the main reception of CCTV's headquarter in Beijing. People realized that inviting journalists from CCTV to report on their unfair stories at local level is indeed a very efficient short-cut to having their matters solved. According to Zhao [2007], it is said that

local officials “do not fear citizens appeals but are afraid of press exposure” (*bu pa shang gao, jiu pa shang bao*).

Since CCTV is part of the Communist Party’s top level “mouth-piece” system, it worked well with Xinhua News Agency and the People’s Daily in gradually disclosing the negative parts of local officials. However, there was no way of covering the higher officials in scandals only if this is confirmed necessary by the party’s top administration, the CPC’s Politburo. Only twice it happened to CCTV and the national media organizations to cover the state leader level officials’ corruption: Politburo member and Party Chief of Beijing Chen Xitong in 1995 and Politburo member and Party Chief of Shanghai Chen Liangyu in 2007.

It is very similar to the economy sectors in China of that period. Everything was carefully planned and centrally supervised by the party’s central committee and the State Council’s senior executives.

In mid-1990s, Chinese media started to witness commercialization. It started with the printing media first, i.e. newspapers and magazines. Government stipends were reduced or even cancelled for small media affiliated to the ministerial, provincial and municipal government offices. The new policy of that time was to have the media to survive in the market by themselves. The advertising industry was booming since nearly 99% of the media organizations were living on advertising revenue rather than financial support from the party and government. It was also the period that a great number of tabloids were born to meet the needs of the market. Private companies were allowed and even invited to join the media industry as joint owners of local and regional newspapers and magazines although their share of the ownerships should never exceed 50% according to the SAPP’s regulation guidelines. Media organizations in Beijing and Shanghai are no longer leading the trend since the market-oriented China Southern Daily Group and Guangzhou Daily Group have occupied the leading positions of annual revenue leagues of national newspaper groups. The Guangzhou-based Southern Daily Group was extremely famous for its two newspapers: *Southern Weekend*, a comprehensive newspaper of political and economic news and international affairs with very sharp and smart commentaries, and the *Southern Metropolitan Daily*, a tabloid-looking newspaper but with very serious writings on current affairs. These two newspapers covered more negative news than any other mainstream newspapers in China and they were well received by the audiences. The rather critical character guaranteed a steady market share of the two and they were famous for covering other provinces’ scandals. It was a practical choice that many provincial- and municipal-level media to follow the experiences of the two. Covering the neighbor province/city’s



scandal is not seriously censored in the system and it became the way of covering negatives with no blame and punishment. When Southern Metropolitan Daily's journalists are sent as correspondents based everywhere in China, they brought the real newspaper's journalism standard reputation among the readers and commercial revenues to a historical height.

Development in the broadcasting industry was comparatively slow. There was no live television news program until July 1, 1997. Vivid audio-visual effects of television news still made the officials nervous especially when it covered sensitive political topics. Live call-in programs on the radio were popular around China, and occasionally presenters and producers lost their control of the live debates on air and there were a number of "accidents" blamed by the SARFT in Beijing and the local level party officials. However, for the first time, approved by the party and State Council Senior Executives, CCTV successfully broadcast the Hong Kong's Handover ceremony live for 24 hours on the premier Channel. It was surprisingly good and people remembered that from that time, more political news was broadcast live including the most important news bulletin, "The United News at 7pm" (Xin Wen Lian Bo) on CCTV's Channel 1. According to the National Bureau of Statistics in China, it is the most-watched program in the world with an average of 100 million viewers every day in the middle of 1990s. To have the most-watched program broadcast live, it was big progress.

After live broadcasting of news, the next revolution in the broadcasting sectors was the separation of broadcasting and production. It was strictly managed that all programs broadcast on TV should be produced by the network itself or its officially affiliated production studios. No private companies were allowed to enter the broadcasting business although they were allowed to assist in the advertising and marketing part in some southern provinces. From 2001, with permission of the CCP's Central Department of Publicity, SARFT promoted the idea of merging all national, provincial and local broadcasting networks into one big corporation, the China Broadcasting Corporation (CBC/CBC Group). In the process of preparing this to happen, the authority confirmed that separation of the broadcasting and production was allowed and even encouraged for better financial health of the broadcasting networks. For the first time, similar to the changes in the printing media sectors, broadcasting no longer had political correctness as the only indicator of professional success. In the same year, SARFT licensed more channels around the world. CCTV had 12 channels and each of the provincial TVs had at least eight channels. The competition was more severe than ever before and the best way for better competitiveness is to reduce the cost. By 2003, almost all national, provincial

and municipal television stations broadcast programs produced by the independent studios along with their own products.

When SARS attacked China in the spring of 2003, it was not only a health and medical issue. The Internet, mobile phone messages and the Hong Kong based Mandarin network Phoenix Television played an important role in circulating the information in the first round. When the Minister of Health of State Council Zhang Wenkang and Mayor of Beijing Meng Xuenong resigned in late March, the public denied their trust in the official newspaper and TV networks. Both of the party and government realized that there was only one way to win this competition with rumors on the Internet, in the mobile text messages and serious critical comments from the Phoenix network and there was no better choice than establishing a 24-hour news channel on CCTV.

The first 24-hour news channel started at 6 a.m. on May 1, 2003. It seriously guaranteed that officials' messages including punishing those officials holding the information of disease, were continuously broadcast to a billion of audiences around China. The party and government won the battle not only in the real fighting with the disease, but also in the campaign of maintaining the trust of people to the party and government.

SARS also empowered a rather small ministry in the huge propaganda machine of the party and government. It was the State Council Information Office, a ministry as part of the State Council but under direct supervision of the Chief of CCP's Central Department of Publicity. Former Shanghai Vice Mayor Zhao Qizheng was the SCIO Minister and he brought the concept of "transparent governance" to the discussion table. Since he led the SCIO in 1998, he had been promoting the new way of working with journalists. Among his many famous sayings about media and politics, he said, "The press is certainly neither your friend, nor your enemy. As an official in the government offices, you must accept that the press is your challenger as always." Zhao requested all level of government in China should establish spokesperson to work with the media on a regular basis through daily briefings, media interviews, press conferences, tours and seminars. He even chaired a team of former communication offices, university professors of journalism and communications and international PR firms to travel around all of the 31 provinces in China and helped the local governments to establish the system. The SARS became a strong evidence to support his effort, and what he promoted was not only well received at the local level but also highly appraised at the top level of the party and government. By 2006, nearly all municipal- or above-level government offices in China had publicized their spokesperson, press secretary and communications officers' contact numbers and e-mail address.

On January 1, 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao issued his Premier Command 477. The Command abolished the lengthy bureaucratic process of getting permits for foreign correspondents to cover any events in China outside Beijing. Before the Command, if a foreign correspondent would like to cover something that happened suddenly in a rural village outside Guangzhou City for example, the correspondent first had to get a journalism visa from Chinese Embassy in their home country. When they arrived in Beijing, they had to apply through the Foreign Ministry's Information Office to get a permission to conduct journalistic work outside Beijing. When the Foreign Ministry permit arrived, it would still be too early to travel since a further permission from the Provincial and Municipal governments were also required. A British journalist said in our interview that he hated that during three events in 2006, he had all approval papers ready to cover the event outside Beijing when the event had taken place three weeks ago. The Premier Command 477 was a formal start of a series of media policy changes in China.

The Chinese media environment witnessed today is a result of many years of heavy state control. Some of the freedoms that journalists both foreign and domestic enjoy now could only be dreamt of two decades ago. China's rapid elevation to a place of power in the world can be described as both a blessing and a curse because as it develops and its importance on the world stage increases, its image takes a battering from foreign media. Before the Olympic Games in Beijing, changes in media and politics were always there at a rather low speed. SARS in 2003 was a powerful driving force for the changes and it seemed the Olympic Games with attention from around the world will definitely bring more influence on the changes.

## **The Olympic Way of Media Handling: Can Foreign Correspondents Be Friendly for the Great "Harmony"?**

Having the chance to host the Olympic Games gave China the opportunity to work on its identity in order to persuade the creation of a better international image. The Beijing Olympics was, in fact, the biggest Chinese face-saving project under the existing mode of China's centralized authoritarianism [Kam-ye Law, 2009]. However, those who were opposed to China's hosting of the Games stepped up their campaigns in trying to compel the world to look at China from their point of view. Ong [2004] observed that anti-China Olympics campaigners made a case that China's poor record in areas such as population policy and human rights should disqualify it from the honor of hosting the Games and feared that the Olympics could even give the government a freer hand for oppressive action in areas like human rights. Using every issue at their disposal as a

weapon against China's efforts to create a good foreign image, the campaigners turned their attention to China's relationship with Sudan in Darfur. A coalition of U.S. celebrities and international human rights activists ratcheted up the pressure on Beijing to do more to help to bring an end to atrocities in Darfur, labeling the 2008 Olympics "*the genocide Olympics*" [Economy and Segal, 2008]. Economy and Segal observed that "*the very public attention they have brought to China's relations with the Sudanese government prompted the movie director Steven Spielberg to withdraw as the artistic director of the opening and the closing ceremonies for the Games.*" The Darfur card fueled a lot of anti-Chinese protests and sentiments during the Olympic torch relay which was marred by protestors as it made its way across the globe in London, Paris, San Francisco and Seoul [Economy and Segal, 2008].

All these issues, while creating a nightmare for China, were good news for Western media whose coverage continued to irritate and frustrate authorities in Beijing. The fact that up to a year before the Olympics China had not lived up to a promise of ensuring an environment conducive for foreign journalists, did not help matters. As part of its bid to host the 2008 Olympics, China promised to relax constraints and "be open in every aspect to the rest of the country and the whole world" [Council on Foreign Relations, 2009]. The change in policy started with the Premier Command 477 on January 1, 2007, which then became permanent on October 17, 2008, and helped to take some heat off of Chinese government from Western media as the development was hailed as a step in the right direction.

Observing from the early days of reporting China and coverage in the Olympics period, it is easy to see that Western media have always had a certain frame within which China is reported, and this is adhered to despite changes that takes place in the country. The successful hosting of the 2008 summer Games and the subsequent change of media policy does not seem to have changed China's frame in the Western media. Foreign journalists and human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch are still trying to pressure the Chinese government to be more global and allow journalists, both foreign and domestic, wider freedom to report on all issues and go anywhere in China to gather news. "This decision marks an important step forward in the battle for freedom of expression in China," said Sophie Richardson, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. "But the struggle will continue until all journalists — particularly Chinese journalists — have full freedom to report and exercise their rights under the Chinese constitution and international law" [China Human Rights Watch, 2009]. Despite international and sporadic domestic pressure, the CCP maintains its control on information in China. Media academics in China are conscious of the tension between

the CCP's attempts to control the mass media in the way that it has always done for decades and the pressures of globalization, which has exposed at least the educated portion of the Chinese population to foreign newspapers, magazines, radio, and above all, television and the Internet [Dillon, 2009]. In 2002 Tsinghua University published a collection of articles in Chinese under the English title, "Globalization and Mass Media: Clash, Convergence and Interaction." Contributors included Chinese academicians and Hong Kong and Western researchers. They discussed, among other issues, the impact of the global media on China, nationalism and internationalism in the media and the reporting of China by foreign broadcasters. Dillon [2009] observes that the breadth of the issues discussed in the articles showed a keen understanding of the issues that face Chinese media professionals, "The greatest challenge, however, may well be for media academics to communicate these concerns to their political masters."

The history of foreign correspondents in China is as old as the Qing Dynasty. Although there have always been restrictions on where the correspondents can go to cover news in China, the country has always been one of the most important sources of news for a lot of prominent Western news organizations. This is attested to by the existence of the Foreign Correspondents Club of China (FCCC), which itself has survived more than three decades. According to statistics by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are over 400 foreign correspondents with permanent bureaus in China. They are from about 245 media organizations representing 44 countries. The United States is the country with the largest number of news organizations with bureaus in China. It has 34 organizations reporting from either Beijing or Shanghai and most of them are major and powerful media organizations like *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times* and CNN. The relationship between foreign correspondents and the Chinese government has not been rosy. It was described, at best, as plagued with accusations and counter accusations, fear, mistrust and frustrations.

Since the establishment of the modern Olympic Games in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, every country that has ever hosted the Games goes through tremendous changes. Infrastructure is overhauled; citizens' attitudes, mannerisms and behavior are revisited; security is stepped up; new policies are adopted and old ones are discarded. All this is done to ensure that the Olympic Games are hosted in a spirit of openness and an environment that is peaceful, clean, flexible, secure and comfortable for both athletes and spectators. China's hosting of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics was not interesting only because it would mark its ultimate opening up, but the government would have to deal with certain changes which given a choice, it would have chosen to let the status quo prevail. One such change was the need to provide a good working

environment for foreign correspondents. Adopting international standards for foreign media and letting media freedom reign in China was something that the government knew was necessary, but it was never a need because there was much more to be lost than gained in trying to make foreign reporters happy. But when it was China's turn to host the Olympics, there was no question about how much would be gained by providing correspondents with freedom to report freely in China. Suddenly, with exception of Tibet, there was no need to seek permission to report around China, and correspondents could interview anyone they pleased, according to the Premier Command 477.

By the time the Chinese government decided to open up the country to foreign correspondents in 2007, the issue had been thoroughly debated by all necessary people in the central government. This means that at the time of implementation, party and government officials in Beijing were aware of the change in policy and they were prepared to face the consequences that came with it. The situation was not the same in the rest of the provinces where foreign correspondents would be frequenting as they hunt for news. While some local authorities were not aware of Beijing's decision to let foreign reporters work in freedom, others had just lived in a media-restrictive environment too long to accept that foreign journalists could be allowed to go around interviewing people without some sort of restriction. As a result, foreign correspondents faced a lot of hostilities at the local level although they were dealt with by the national-level offices in a very friendly and open manner. According the questionnaire they filled out, foreign correspondents were still insulted and assaulted and some got their equipment damaged in the provinces.

## **Research Methods of This Paper**

Carrying out a study about the media and government in China has proved to be a challenge because finding information from the government is not easy. This study takes place a year and a half after Beijing hosted the 2008 Olympic Games. Due to the fact that the event is still recent, there does not seem to be any research that has been done concerning foreign correspondents in China and their relationship with the Chinese government with regard to the Olympics. This being the case, the study did not have specific previous studies to refer to and borrowed some ideas of research design. The closest the study came to finding previous studies to learn from, was research done to investigate some other phenomena in the media, but still quite different from this study. In this regard, the researcher almost worked from scratch to come up with research design for the study.

The best research method suited to this study is the qualitative method. Berg [2007] describes the qualitative method as one that properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative researchers then are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles and so forth. The setting of this study is the capital—the administrative city of China, Beijing, where almost all major foreign media organizations have their main China bureaus. Beijing is also home to members of the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SCIO that look after the affairs of foreign correspondents. Qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to or people represented by their personal traces such as letters, newspaper accounts, diaries and so on. The nature of this study in terms of finding information from which to draw interpretations and conclusions demanded that qualitative methods of research be used. Qualitative research involves several methods of data collection such as questionnaire, focus groups, field observation, in-depth interviews, and case studies.

Examining an event to determine its impact on a relationship between two sides is a hard thing to do because impact on a relationship is intangible, unless the impact is physical. This study endeavors to find out the impact that the 2008 Olympics had on the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign correspondents. By just looking at the Games it would be difficult to come up the desired results. However, examining certain events that took place in China before and after the Games would help in the understanding of whether the Olympics brought changes to the relationship or the status quo remained.

This study has employed the use of the 12 most important events that happened in China in 2008 to help examining the Olympics to see whether the Games made any impact on Chinese government's media relations and how foreign correspondents evaluate the efforts and changes. The case study method tends to focus on a holistic description and explanation; and, as a general statement, any phenomenon can be studied by a case study method [Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1995; 1998]. The 12 case studies used in this paper include:

### **2008 Chinese winter storms**

A series of winter storms affected large portions of southern and central China starting on January 25, 2008 until February 6, 2008. The systems affected most of the area with heavy snows, ice and cold temperatures causing extensive damage and

transportation disruption for several thousand travelers. It has become China's worst winter weather in half a century. It caused damage and paralyzed transport. The cost was 150 billion yuan (about 19 billion U.S. dollars) and caused complaints from around the country.

### **March 14 riots in Lhasa**

On March 14, a serial criminal act of violence involving beating, destruction of property, looting and arson took place in Lhasa, and Western media have paid it extraordinary attention. At least 18 innocent civilians were killed in the riots and rioters in the Tibetan provincial capital caused much damage to property. The unrest was organized by the supporters of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan “independence” forces.

### **Hand-foot-mouth disease (HFMD)**

HFMD, characterized by fever, sores in the mouth and rashes on hands and feet, is not a new infection and is common among infants and children, experts say. It can be triggered by various viruses and usually does not lead to death. An outbreak of HFMD in China, beginning in March in Fuyang, Anhui, led to 25,000 infections and 42 deaths by May 13.

### **Train crash in Shandong**

A speeding express train derailed and crashed into an oncoming regional train in eastern China on April 24, throwing a dozen carriages down an embankment and killing at least 70 people. The accident was due to human errors—one of the trains might have been traveling much faster than the speed limit. It was believed to be China's worst in more than a decade.

### **Wenchuan earthquake**

A magnitude-8.0 earthquake hit Wenchuan County in southwest Sichuan Province on May 12. The quake, the most destructive natural disaster to hit China for decades, left more than 87,000 people dead or missing and millions homeless. The cost was put at more than 845 billion yuan. The country was mobilized for disaster relief reconstruction which is still ongoing.

### **Xinjiang terrorists killed 17 police**

Armed with guns, explosives, knives and axes, two terrorists, Abdurahman Azat and Kurbanjan Hemit, drove a stolen heavy truck toward a team of 70 police in a regular morning exercise, and also threw explosives and brandished knives at them. Seventeen people were killed and 15 injured in the attack in Kashgar, four days



before the Beijing Olympics. The Kashgar court said the two mounted the terror attack to sabotage the Beijing Olympic Games.

### **The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games**

Beijing successfully hosted the Games of the 29th Olympiad from August 8 to August 24. More than 10,000 athletes from 204 countries and regions took part in 302 events in 28 sports. Athletes from a record 87 National Olympic Committees—the most yet—won medals. The Games saw 43 world records and 132 Olympic records set. From September 6 to September 17, over 4,000 athletes from more than 140 countries took part in the Summer Paralympic Games.

### **Tainted milk scandal**

China's tainted dairy scandal was exposed in September after babies who were fed milk powder, produced by the Hebei Province-based Sanlu Group, developed kidney stones. Other top dairy firms were also involved, including Meng Niu. The contamination of milk formula killed six babies and more than 290,000 infants suffered from urinary problems such as kidney stones after drinking the tainted milk formula. The scandal led to the resignation of China's chief quality supervisor Li Changjiang. Several officials were sacked, arrests were made and the government is working on overhauling the country's dairy industry.

### **The Shanxi mudslide accident**

The Shanxi mudslide was caused by the collapse of an unlicensed mine landfill in Xiangfen county, Linfen, Shanxi Province, and killed at least 267 people and injured 34. Around 8 a.m. on September 8, 2008, the retaining wall of a waste iron ore reservoir collapsed after torrential rain, causing a major mudslide which inundated a village and crowded marketplace. The unlicensed Tashan Mine was operated by the Tashan Mining Company. Meng Xuenong, Governor of Shanxi, resigned a day after the event, on September 14.

### **Subway tunnel construction site collapse**

November 15, a 75-meter-long section of the subway tunnel under construction in the provincial capital of Zhejiang collapsed at the Fengqing Avenue in Xiaoshan District, trapping at least 50 workers and creating a huge crater where 11 vehicles were trapped. Four people were dead and 17 are missing. The construction company has dispatched workers to set up brackets for reinforcing the remaining tunnel sections.

### **China's first space walk**

On September 27, Chinese astronaut Zhai Zhigang, wearing a Chinese-made Feitian space suit, conducted a 20-minute space walk. China is only the third nation to successfully send a man on a spacewalk, behind Russia and the United States.

### **Direct air and sea transport and postal services across the Taiwan Strait**

Between November 3 to 7, Chen Yunlin, president of the mainland's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), headed a delegation visit to Taiwan, the first ARATS leader to visit the island. During their first meeting in Taipei, Chen and Chiang Pin-kung, chairman of the Taiwan-based Straits Exchange Foundation, signed agreements on direct shipping and flights, as well as postal services. Since December 15, the two sides have launched direct air and sea transport as well as postal services between several mainland cities, including Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Fuzhou and Shenzhen, and Taiwan cities, such as Taipei, Kaohsiung and Keelung.

Cases are selected according to Chinese and foreign media's coverage in 2008. Some are selected because they took place just a few months before the Olympics, therefore providing a good picture of how the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign correspondents was before the Games. Some cases are selected because they attracted the interest of almost all foreign reporters based in China after the Olympic Games.

Following a history of distrust between foreign correspondents and the Chinese government, this study was met with a lot of resistance from foreign correspondents who were approached for information. This happened despite the researcher making it clear that the information collected would be treated as confidentially as possible. Most foreign correspondents did not trust that the researcher could succeed in keeping their identities confidential from authorities. Nonetheless, those that accepted to provide information have their names replaced by codes and pseudonyms in the study. All that the information sources have is the researcher's word that confidentiality will be respected.

Primary data for two: (1) 63 questionnaires completed by foreign correspondents anonymously and (2) in-depth interviews with 10 media organizations that have bureaus based in Beijing. Purposive sampling was used and criteria for drawing the sample, among other things, included the duration the media organizations have been reporting from China, their world reach and circulation and their involvement in the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games. The main method of getting information from the

sources was intensive interviews. All interviews except two were conducted in the premises of the media organizations. The two were done in locations picked out by the sources. Having the interviews in sources' premises and locations of their choice was important because it gave the sources an environment with which they were comfortable. Being in familiar surroundings and in locations they picked out, the sources had a sense of being in control of the information they provided to the researcher. Each interview took a minimum of 45 minutes and a maximum of 1 hour 10 minutes. Interviews were also supplemented by questionnaires, especially for sources that were too cautious about their identities and those who could not find time to sit down for an interview.

One of the characteristics of qualitative research methods is that there is a heavy accumulation of information as the research goes through data collection stages like interviews and field observations. Organizing, analyzing and making sense of all this information poses special challenges for the researcher using qualitative methods. The qualitative research method does not come with rigid methods of data analysis like quantitative research, which has computer programs that do the job.

## **Findings and Results**

In this part, I will first go through the questionnaire and highlight the feedback. Five of the following issues are strongly focused on and examined.

1. Is there a change in the government's regulation and practice for foreign journalists to have timely access to the disasters and crises in 2008?
2. Are central government offices (e.g. The Foreign Ministry and State Council Information Office) promised practices realized at local level? Why can it not be normally achieved?
3. Should foreign journalists appreciate the changes by the Chinese government and how?
4. What are the driving forces for the changes? To rank the factors in a journalist preferred order.
5. Do journalists believe the changes are sustainable and where will be the next stop?

The second part is analysis of data from the intensive interviews with foreign journalists. Due to confidentiality matters where there will be need to identify sources and their organizations by name, the study will use letters and figures. For example, media organizations will be identified as M1, M2, M3 and so on while foreign journalists will be identified as Ja, Jb, Jc and so forth. Government respondents are identified as G1 and

G2. As is the case with qualitative research, the study generated a lot of information and making sense of it all was a big challenge. The data sources brought out issues within issues in their discussion of the topic under research and establishing what would be most relevant and important to this study was a difficult task. In order to ease the process of analyzing the data, this part of the paper brings out themes and concepts that have been identified from the data to provide a picture or put things into perspective as an effort is made to address the questions that this study is intending to answer.

Among the 12 most important cases, riots in Lhasa in March and the earthquake in May attracted the most attention. According to the questionnaire, 44/63 covered all of the 12 events and 63/63 covered the Lhasa riots and Wenchuan earthquake. At the same time, the 2009 riots in Urumqi, Xijiang, were frequently mentioned; 12/12 interviews with media organizations cited the Xinjiang riots in commenting on the changes of media policy in China. Since the interviewees said very few words about other events, this paper will only analyze the three cases above by looking in detail at how the Chinese government dealt with each case in terms of how it related with foreign correspondents in the cases. The chapter also looks at how foreign reporters responded to government decisions in each of the cases.

### **Riots in Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, March 2008**

The Tibet autonomous region has always been a source of controversy in the Western media and a very sensitive issue in China and for the Chinese government. Every time the Tibet issue comes up, fences are immediately erected and everybody takes their sides bringing out a list of reasons they believe and hold certain opinions about the autonomous region. One of the first things that foreign correspondents in China learn about the country is that Tibet is off bounds and issues to do with the region are best left unsaid. This is why it came as no surprise that when riots broke out in Lhasa in March 2008, the Chinese government did not want any foreign reporter traveling to Tibet to cover the riots. It is clear from the case that Chinese authorities were simply not ready to open Tibet gates to foreign media when there was a crisis, of all times. The very small number of Tibetans who promoted the independence have never hidden their desire to propagate to the media, who knows what they would have said at the height of the riots given an opportunity to talk to the world through a foreign journalist. The case shows that the government was not prepared to deal with the debate that would ensue following news reports if foreign correspondents were allowed in. Maintaining the blockade to media was deemed the safest way to handle the crisis.

Xinhua News Agency was the only source of information. Being state owned, the status only helped to strengthen other news organizations' suspicions about the truthfulness and accuracy of the agency's version of what was happening in Lhasa. Deciding to only speak through Xinhua proved to be disastrous for the Chinese government at the early stage. Foreign correspondents were forced to speculate about events in Lhasa based on their past experiences and knowledge of Tibet and its issues. In order to make a point of what they were convinced was happening in Tibet, some news organizations like CNN were willing to publish stories that were far from being accurate. While this was viewed as dangerous carelessness and unfortunate, others thought it was understandable and inevitable considering the circumstances. Foreign news reports were full of negative stories about China and each report seemed to push the government further and further into a tight corner as it tried to defend its decisions at the same time condemn the Western press for bias. The fact that the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games were just around the corner did not help matters because based on Western news reports, anti-China campaigners were given impetus resulting in some quarters of the international community being forced into a decision of whether they should attend the Olympic opening ceremony.

When things had quieted down in Lhasa and other parts of China that were affected by the riots, the government organized a media tour which included several foreign media organizations. The gesture was well received but most foreign correspondents complained that it was too little, too late. The government selected the foreign journalists who were invited and officials decided for the journalists the places they visited in Lhasa and who they interviewed. Of course with the exception of the monks who crashed into press briefings and started talking to journalists about anything they would like to say. There is still a big veil of mystery on what happened in Lhasa in March 2008. If the Chinese government decides some day to let foreign journalists get into Tibet, the Lhasa riots will still be an area of interest because the case never closed.

### **Earthquake in Wenchuan County, Sichuan Province, May 2010**

Handling of foreign correspondents in the Sichuan earthquake disaster was a complete departure from the handling of Lhasa riots. Openness and speedy availability of information was unprecedented coupled with support from all sectors of the government that were involved in dealing with the crisis. The government of China demonstrated a willingness to take a risk on foreign media which was an indication that it was ready to deal with the consequences and a very good gesture for hosting the Olympic Games in Beijing in August. The case shows that the Chinese government was

shifting from viewing foreign reporters as always bent on negative portrayal of China to professionals who, given a chance, would report things as they are. Having government officials setting up media centers in Sichuan and putting in place a system through which the press would be able to access information like press conferences and briefings was unheard of in Chinese crisis management. When this was done it was almost like a dare from the Chinese government to see if the international media would be objective in reporting the disaster. In return international news was rife with how well the Chinese government was handling the crisis. The government got a lot of credit from being open and allowing journalists to report freely which made the way Lhasa riots were handled to seem like an unfortunate incident that should be quickly forgotten. If treatment of the media in the Lhasa riots was poison to the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign correspondents, then Sichuan was the antidote.

However, the case has also shown that as much as the Chinese government demonstrated an open attitude to the media, it was not totally prepared to go the distance as is evident in the way officials started behaving once certain “sensitive” issues like corruption came up. There was an effort at the local government level to hide information and prevent foreign media from interviewing people or visiting some places. The effort was not too successful because both the central government and the media had enjoyed the fruits that came with free reporting. Eventually foreign journalists managed to report about every issue they could possibly cover about the earthquake. The Sichuan earthquake is remembered by the Chinese as a devastating disaster that claimed a lot of lives, but some foreign correspondents remember the incident as when, for the first time, China got rid of control and paranoia from its character and let the media do its work with as little interference as possible.

### **Riots in Urumqi, Xinjiang Autonomous Region, July 2009**

Parts of the history of Xinjiang and the circumstances surrounding the autonomous region are similar to Tibet. Both regions have some population, educated by the West and independent activists that believe China invaded their land and they harbor sovereignty ambitions. When riots broke out in Urumqi in July 2009 it was almost like a repeat of Lhasa only in a different location. After the media relations gains that were achieved in Sichuan a year earlier, the Chinese government was geared to score more points with foreign correspondents. Within hours of the incident being known, all responsible government officials were present in Urumqi and ready to provide information to journalists. While Urumqi and the rest of Xinjiang had been shut off in terms of communication services for national security reasons, a hotel was identified in

the city as press center with Internet and phone service where all reporters were designated to stay and work. As journalists crews arrived in Urumqi the morning after the riots started they were welcomed at the airport and offered transport to the hotel. A press center was set up in the hotel and press conferences and briefings were organized for the length of the crisis. All relevant officials remained handy in Urumqi for interviews and inquiries.

Unlike in the Lhasa case where later on officials grew cold feet, in Urumqi there were no signs of a cover up, instead efforts were made to provide as much information as possible on other issues that were surfacing days after the riots. Instead of remaining silent, the government made an honest effort to explain the situation even discussing the steps that it would take to find out what caused the violence. The government made sure that foreign journalists were informed about the subsequent investigations and the trials that followed. In the end almost all foreign media organizations that were following the Urumqi incident managed to exhaust all possible news angles and were able to declare the case closed.

Below is a tabulated look at how the government of China dealt with the three cases in terms of allowing access to journalists and providing of information. The first column for each case is "First Reaction" which stands for the first thing that the government did when the incident happened. The second column is "Media Handling" where the table records steps the government took to address the needs of the media during the crisis. Column three is "Official Spin" in which the study observes how the government steered information to come out to the media and subsequently to the public in the way that it wanted. "Closure" in column four looks at whether the media exhausted all possible news angles to the incidents, whether journalists willingly moved on from the incidents because there was not much interesting anymore to report or they were forced to abandon the cases following government refusal to provide access to information. The last column is "Assessment." In the column the study makes an opinion based on observations of the cases.

	<b>First Reaction</b>	<b>Media Handling</b>	<b>Official Spin</b>	<b>Closure</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>Tibet</b>	Government puts a lid on information. Xinhua News Agency is the only outlet.	Blockade for Journalists to Tibet is maintained.	Government remains defensive and offers no new information.	The issue still lingers. The media remain suspicious and curious. So many questions remain unanswered.	Tibet as a media issue was/is still too fragile for the Chinese government. It is not sure what to expect if foreign journalists are allowed in.
<b>Sichuan</b>	The media and the public know about the incident as soon as it happens. Xinhua News Agency is first to report.	Journalists descend on Sichuan unrestricted. They are welcomed by government officials and assisted in getting information.	Government provides its own explanation of issues. Remains open and corporative to media inquiries.	Though a few questions remain unaddressed on quality of buildings, reporters exhausted news angles including the trials later.	The Chinese government decided to take a risk despite what the outcome could be. Though it tried to back-off, it was too late to get back to old strategies.
<b>Urumqi</b>	Xinhua News Agency reports about the incident as soon as it happens .	Journalists are allowed into Urumqi and they can get information freely. Officials are flexible and available.	Government offers its own version of what happened and remained open to media questions.	Closure is almost total. Journalists reported all they could including trials that followed.	Probably the best handled incident of crisis nature by the Chinese government so far. Comparatively government was most open in this incident.

The data being analyzed reflects view points of foreign journalists in their own individual capacities but also at policy level of their particular media houses. It should be pointed out that some foreign journalists at the time of the study were in China representing media organizations that were based in other countries, in other words they did not have bureaus in China. These journalists' circumstances were different from those who operated from bureaus in terms of policies that their organizations followed, for example accepting interns to work for an organization. The table below categorizes the available data into four themes. Each theme is described and concepts generated by each are selected and described as well. Below the table is further analysis through a discussion of themes and the concepts.



Category	Themes	Description	Concepts Formed
<b>Theme # 1</b>	<i>Permanent Change of media policy</i>	<i>Premier Command 477/537 and the Transparent Governance Act by State Council</i>	<p>(1)<b>Olympics rules</b>-Set of rules the Chinese government put in place for foreign media before Olympics then later made into permanent policy</p> <p>(2)<b>Ten day rule</b>- The old rule for foreign journalists in China that required them to apply ten days prior before going outside Beijing and even still necessary to get further permission from the targeted province or city's foreign affairs offices</p> <p>(3)<b>The White Book</b>- The book that contains the new set of rules for foreign correspondents</p>
<b>Theme # 2</b>	<i>Implementing the new rules</i>	After declaration of the new media rules, the next step was putting it into practice across China	<p>(1)<b>Interference</b>- Where some officials at local level try to bar reporters from accessing information in different ways like asking for too many requirements</p> <p>(2)<b>Foot-dragging</b>- Officials in some State Council Ministries and mostly at local levels make deliberate delays in providing information to frustrate journalists</p> <p>(3)<b>Shadowing</b>- Officials or people sent by local government to follow journalists around as they gather information</p>
<b>Theme # 3</b>	<i>Awareness of the new rules</i>	Providing civic education to officials to make them aware of the new media rules and how to deal with journalists. Media relations capacity building	(1) <b>Popularization</b> - publicizing the new rules and creating acceptance and tolerance
<b>Theme # 4</b>	<i>Maintaining status quo</i>	The question is raised whether the Chinese government will not change back to old times of foreign media restrictions and how sustainable the new changes are?	<p>(1)<b>China bashers</b>- The term describes foreign media that is bent on negative reporting of China</p> <p>(2)<b>Panda huggers</b>- The term describes foreign media organizations that are deemed to be writing to please or</p>

			appease the Chinese government
<b>Theme # 5</b>	<i>The danger in change</i>	Foreign journalists still face a lot of risks as they cover negative news in provinces.	(1) <b>Effectively shut, officially open</b> - On paper in Beijing China is open yet when one goes to provinces evidence shows it is still shut to foreign journalists in most of the negative cases  (2) <b>Intimidation tactics</b> - Some foreign journalists have been assaulted and equipment damaged on duty to stop them from reporting certain issues in the local areas

At the onset of the data collection, it was deemed important to first learn the history of foreign correspondents in China. This was necessary because it helped the research to have some perspective of how far the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign correspondents has come. For this reason the first journalists and the first media organization the study got data from were one of the oldest in China. The journalist coded as “Jc” from a media organization coded as “M2” provided the background to how foreign correspondents have been relating with the Chinese government.

Jc is the head of M2 in China and has been in the country for several decades during which Jc has interviewed both President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao among other prominent party leaders. According to Jc, before China adopted the reform policy under Deng Xiaoping foreign journalists were even regarded as spies for foreign governments. To keep them under surveillance, all foreign journalists were required to stay in diplomatic compounds where it was easy for authorities to tap phones, bug apartments and tail the journalists wherever they went. *“There was a saying in China back then which warned the public of three dangers in their homes: fire, burglars/thieves and foreign journalists.”* Journalists were required to apply for traveling outside Beijing and it took 10 days—what was referred to as the “10-day rule”—for the application to be processed. In most cases, after that long wait, the application would be turned down. Because of all the surveillance it was easy then to meet leaders of the communist party than it has ever been after reform. After 1978 the situation started changing albeit at a very slow pace as some of the restrictions started being lifted, like where foreign journalists could stay. As China opened more to the outside world and developed through the 1980s and 1990s, the relationship between foreign journalists and Chinese government improved. For example the Foreign Ministry started calling for regular press briefings on arising issues. Then came China’s second bid to host the Olympic Games for 2008 which when China

won, was a crossroads for the relationship between the government and foreign press. *"A turning point for foreign journalists came to China. As the country prepared to host the 2008 Olympics, Premier Wen announced on January 1, 2007 that China would temporarily remove article 15 which restricted our movement to cover news in China and also required that foreign journalists should apply for a visa to go outside Beijing. The removal of the restrictions also allowed foreign reporters to interview anyone they wanted in China. We call these new conditions 'Olympic rules.'"* The first test of the Olympic rules was the riots in Lhasa whose media relations' handling was poor. The second test was the earthquake in Sichuan which the government handled so well, demonstrating that some lessons had been learned from Lhasa. Jc observed that as the Games drew to a close, there was a spirit of anxiety among the foreign correspondents community, everyone waited for the government to finally end the Olympic rules on October 17, 2008. For most veteran foreign journalists in China though, according to Jc, it was unlikely that China would revert to the old rules because it had tasted and enjoyed the benefits of a "free media." For these veterans it did not come as a surprise when Premier Wen announced on October 17, 2008 that the Olympic rules would become permanent. The government released a booklet that contained the "new rules." The booklet is white in color and foreign correspondents refer to it as "the white book."

The study found that the decision to make Olympic rules permanent after the Games was one of the first direct results of the Olympics. An effort was made to explore this development more, especially to establish what issues came up for both the foreign correspondents and the Chinese government. Respondents mentioned a lot of issues that needed to be looked at with the permanency of the Olympic rules and the study has selected a few that are pertinent for analysis. Jb from M1 raised the issue of implementation of the Olympic rules as a law. Jb said it was obvious when the announcement was made that officials in Beijing were aware of the development and they had gotten used to engaging foreign correspondents during the Olympic Games. The question was how officials in the provinces would take it. Jb said since the new rules took effect in 2008, there are still government and party officials in some provinces that do not seem aware because even if foreign correspondents show them the white book they still try to bar reporters from interviewing people. When reporters manage to convince the officials about the new rules, there is a lot of "foot dragging" in order to frustrate the journalists and force them to give up and leave. *"These are local officials for the police or just government officials for the village or the town, I do not think that most of the times they are doing it because they were told, it's their self protection sort of instinct because they think foreign journalists are there to cause trouble or to write negative news that would jeopardize either their position in the government or their business or even local tourism or just*

*basic image of the area.*" This shows that as the central government was deciding to make the Olympic rules permanent, officials in provinces where sometimes foreign correspondents get most of their news stories were not made aware of the changes. This realization led the study to the crucial issue of making the Chinese public aware of the new law. Respondent G1 addressed the issue. G1 explained that the government realized from the beginning that there would be need to popularize the new rules concerning foreign journalists to all officials across China. After the Olympic Games in 2008, the government started a training program in media relations for its officials and as part of the program; every department was required to establish position of a spokesperson. G1 observed that during the Games China learned that when something happens officials should not just sit and wait for reporters to come knocking but get out and tell the media what is happening. *"We now know that if things happen you cannot block the door, you must first let the media know. From the city government every department has a spokesman or woman and it's only after the Games that this was thought seriously about. Every year we train the spokesmen, we have classes, sometimes even outside the country. Like next month we have a group of people from the city government, they are all spokespersons, we will go to a British university for training. We think this is very important for us to learn how to dialogue with the world, how to explain ourselves to different cultures with different concepts. I think after the Games China became more open to think about these kinds of things because today the world is different, we have the Internet, something happens this minute, the next minute the whole world knows."* Gradually most of China is becoming aware of the freedom that foreign correspondents now have and when an incident takes place, local officials are able to handle the media even without officials from the central government in Beijing overseeing. A good example was the Urumqi riots in 2009 which happened when the training program had started a few years ahead.

As the study flushed out issue after issue and got respondents to address them, a pattern was taking shape and the more the pattern became clear and larger, the more other issues surfaced. Out of all, the one issue that needed to be dealt with was whether or not China is receptive to the changes occurring in its relationship with foreign reporters. While G1 thought the government's training of its officials in media relations was enough evidence of receptiveness to change, some respondents in the foreign correspondents' community were a bit cynical. Ja, another journalist from M1 argued that in order to come up with a fair assessment the situation has to be looked at separately from the side of foreign journalists and that of the Chinese government. Ja said in Beijing things were indeed moving in the right direction as more and more key government departments were creating position of spokesperson and made it a practice to engage foreign media on issues. However, the picture in provinces is totally different

as foreign journalists are still facing danger from officials that do not seem to care about the changes. *"There are whole portions of provinces that are shut at the moment, effectively shut, officially open..."* Ja looks at the fact that there are still parts of China that are off-limits to foreign journalists as a worrisome aspect of the changes that came with the Olympics. *"It's a modern country....I mean why should there be a regulation at all? You are accredited here, if you are not breaking a law you should be allowed to go anywhere, if you are breaking a law then fine, of course you shouldn't go around setting fire to things, but in a normal open country, you shouldn't have one law that says, Oh! Yes journalists can go places and another that says this place is temporarily closed, it shouldn't...it's not modern."* Je, a respondent who works in China as a freelance reporter for M3 observed that while the government allows foreign reporters to freely travel in China and get news there seem to be an effort to still control the information they get from sources by systematically intimidating sources. This is where when there is an incident in a province and officials know that journalists will come asking questions, they (officials) instill fear in the sources to stop them from speaking: *"...what bothers me is the not-fair game type of behavior, like intimidation of our sources. This is the number one concern in my view. We are not free to report until a source is free to talk to us. We have seen other types of intimidation towards foreign correspondents, you know like "we don't like your report, you are difficult...We see intimidation as a tactic by officials and that's not acceptable by any means."*

The study brought out a myriad of other issues from both government respondents and foreign correspondents which will best be articulated in the next chapter that will have a discussion of the results the research achieved.

## **Discussions**

When one takes a look at Chinese history, it is easy to break it into periods that the country has gone through to get to where it is now. A cursory look will show that there was a period of dynasties when China was ruled by emperors and royal families. This was followed by a time of civil strife before the founding of the republic in 1949. The early years of the republic are identified with the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. These four periods would represent China's old times while later years, which are contemporary, are recognized with a different set of historical periods that some people refer to as the post Mao era. Another quick browse shows the reforms ushered into being in the 1970s facilitating China's opening up to the rest of the world. China's winning of the bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in 2001 introduced a new period for China. All these phases the country has been experiencing have had their own impacts and results on Chinese government and the

Chinese people. Some results have been clear to see and easy to quantify while impact of other phases has been subtle and most likely just felt than being experienced in empirical terms. While not ignoring the earlier periods of Chinese history, which have helped to interpret the present, the study has explored the period of the Olympic Games to appreciate its impact on China and the results that came along with it. In this discussion the study takes a closer look at the results of its research to understand the impact of the Olympic Games on China, specifically on its relationship with foreign reporters and the results emanating from this impact.

## **Paradigm Shift**

Researching the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign journalists, the study discovered a peculiar kind of relationship where two parties find a way of staying together in an arrangement void of trust and support. The China that existed between the founding of the republic to the 1970s looked at foreign journalists as a nuisance, people who were bent on causing trouble by intruding on issues that never concerned them. Foreign reporters were always treated with suspicion and other than allowing them into China and giving them a place to stay, the government saw no need to provide any other support. Providing an enabling environment for foreign press was a concept that would only earn scorn and probably retribution to whoever would have the guts to make that proposition. Considering the political direction China had taken then, in terms of foreign policy and its way of governance, the country had no need for foreign media. Allowing journalists from other countries to be reporting from China was just an unsubstantiated foreign policy gesture. Although China turned a new leaf in 1978 when it adopted the open door policy, its doors remained tightly shut to foreign journalists. While the new policy demanded change at different levels it seemed to enforce the same old treatment of foreign media. As expected, implementation of the new policies started translating into good economic results. The economic boom that China began enjoying started attracting international attention and recognition and with that came increased foreign media interest. Soon every international media organization with enough capital wanted to establish a bureau in China. It is interesting to note that while doing its best to remain consistent with the opening up spirit by allowing more and more foreign media organizations to get established in the country, China continued to refuse the changes that come with the package.

July 13, 2001 goes down in Chinese history as when the world gave China the license to show off. The implication of this great opportunity was that in order to show off to the world, China would have to experience a paradigm shift and to a large extent, in ways

that neither the government, the party nor ordinary Chinese could phantom. It had now been over 20 years since opening up and for the first time the Chinese government had no choice but to look at how it related with foreign correspondents. In its bid to host the Olympic Games China promised to ease its constraints on foreign journalists and become open; now that it had won the bid, it was time to make good on the promise. Considering the history that describes the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign correspondents, both the government and the journalists never expected change to be quick. It was obvious that the Chinese government was at great pains to change its stance on foreign media and despite the inevitability of what was to come the government would take its time. This could be why it took the Chinese government seven years after winning the bid to finally cut some of the ropes it had tied foreign journalists with. This does not mean though, that during the seven years the government was completely ignoring the foreign press. G1 observed that the Chinese government realized that world interest in China and its affairs would increase because of the hosting of the Olympic Games. Engaging foreign journalists in the course of preparations was one of the best ways to let the world know about China. *“What we did first were press conferences for the most part. All the information from the government, from Beijing city and the Games organizers was given through regular press conferences. The frequency of the press conferences increased as we got closer to the Games. In 2004 we had at least once a month only, and then as we drew closer to the Games we had once a week and twice a week.”* G1 pointed out that as one way of engaging the foreign press, the government in collaboration with BOCOG made a plan to invite at least 40 journalists every year from around the world to visit China. When they arrived in China the journalists were asked what they would be interested in and the government would make arrangements to meet the needs. *“For example, some journalists wanted to write an article about how China develops its athletes, so we suggested taking them to a school to see the training and the athletes’ daily life. Some would be interested in writing about older residents like the Hutongs—there was some controversy about Hutongs, some people said Beijing should not destroy the old area. So we took them there to see how the government had preserved some areas. We also organized some activities for the correspondents in Beijing, we regularly, like twice or three times a month organized some activities according to what they wanted to see.”* These interactions helped a lot of officials in key ministries and departments to get used to providing information to journalists. By January 1, 2007 when Premier Wen signed for temporary lifting of restrictions it was almost just like an acknowledgement of a practice that had already been in existence. Because of all the interaction between 2001 and 2007 increasingly government officials would permit foreign media to travel outside Beijing and interview people. Sometimes where foreign journalist jumped procedure to get information from sources, it became common and easy for official to look the other way. *“Over the years we*

*have ignored that regulation (10-day rule) because there was no way we could perform our duties if we followed that rule strictly. We could not pursue breaking news, we could not possibly plan in advance and also it just didn't make any sense. In fact over the years before the Olympics, before they changed the rules we have been ignoring it, we have been breaking the rules and Chinese authorities knew that we were breaking the rules but they pretended like they didn't know."*

Opening up to the larger international community meant that China wanted a spot on the international stage and to take that spot China needed to play by the rules of the international stage. Swallowing pride and conforming to international standards was one of the first things that China learned to do at the onset of opening up. Admittance into the World Trade Organization (WTO) became one of the direct results. In order to host Olympic Games successfully China needed the support of the foreign media and changing some policies was inevitable, but China did not want to look too enthusiastic about changing its rules lest it be viewed as an acknowledgement of what the international community had been saying that the restrictions were wrong. Having kept foreign correspondents at arm's length for the most part of China's history, the government needed to learn how to interact with international media first before deciding to grant freedom. During the seven years of partial engagement with foreign reporters before 2007, the government of China was learning all it could about media relations. Its officials learned among other things how to hold successful press conferences, put out persuasive media releases and organizing effective media tours. The temporary lifting of restrictions in 2007 was the Chinese government's way of saying, "we are ready to engage foreign correspondents more and we will deal with the consequences." While this was done for the Olympic Games, it was also serving as an experiment to see if after the Games the restrictions could be made permanent.

### **First test**

After the successful hosting of the Olympic Games, talking about the 2008 riots in Lhasa always sounds inconsequential; in fact one stands the risk of being viewed as hung-up on negatives. But avoiding mentioning Lhasa in the Beijing Olympic discourse is as good as trying to talk about the founding of the People's Republic of China without mentioning Chairman Mao. The Lhasa incident is important not only because of what it represents no matter what time it might have happened in Chinese history, but it was the first crisis that the Chinese government had to deal with after demonstrating to the world that it was ready to let foreign correspondents report freely in China. Lhasa was the first test for the "media relations classes" Chinese government officials had been



taking for six years. The Tibet case outlined in chapter four indicates that when the riots broke out, the government made no attempt to engage the media in any way other than being defensive and later on playing victim when Western press like CNN reported inaccurately about the incident. The government's behavior in the Lhasa incident managed to undo most of the confidence building work that had been done throughout the Olympics preparation period. China critics who had commented with skepticism when China announced the temporary Olympic rules in 2007 seemed vindicated. A great step forward had just been replaced by several steps backwards. It is important to mention that in the Olympic rules Tibet was still off-limits to foreign journalists; they still required getting a permit. The government seemed to consider Tibet as too fragile and sensitive to let foreign journalists come and go as they pleased. This being the case, it is likely that the government was not sure what the situation would turn out to be if after all the years of media blockade, suddenly the public in Lhasa was allowed to mingle and talk to foreign journalists. It would be naïve to argue that the Chinese government was not aware of the damage it was causing to its international image at a time when it needed to be creating a perfect identity. It's obvious that the Chinese government decided that it would be easy to live with a bad image during the Olympic Games than deal with the consequences of opening Tibet to foreign media's scrutiny. Then several days later, after all the dust had settled, the government decided to organize a media tour of Lhasa and other affected provinces for selected foreign journalists. The gesture was a good media relations move but it was misplaced and badly timed. It was misplaced because the journalists selected for the tour knew that being taken by the government to Lhasa after riots meant being shown what the government wanted and made to interview those who were prepped for it. Everything would be staged. The tour was wrongly timed because taking a journalist to an incident after it is over is like a slap in the face. The government would have done better to just move on after the incident and count on time to erase the bad memories.

## **Second test**

While China was trying to move on from the Tibet mishap and concentrate on making last touches to its Olympics preparations, three months away then, the Sichuan earthquake would not have occurred at a worst time. In China they say “塞翁失马, 焉知非福-sāi wēng shī mǎ, yān zhī fēi fú”, which in English can be loosely translated as “*misfortune may be an actual blessing.*” In the face of disaster therein lay a media relations opportunity and the Chinese government grabbed it. Details of the case in chapter five are full of all the right media relations moves that China made during the crisis. After fumbling in the Lhasa incident the foreign correspondents community expected to be

barred again and when they were given total access and freedom to report from the scene, foreign journalists could not believe the change. It reflected in the stories they published a few hours after the earthquake struck. In its first report CNN observed that *“Such swift reaction and extensive news coverage has not been seen in previous disasters. When the Great Tangshan earthquake struck 32 years ago, the Chinese media kept the information secret for a long time, even though over 240,000 people were killed. In the early stages of the 2003 SARS outbreak, domestic media downplayed reports on the deadly epidemic, even as it spiraled out of control and spread globally. More recently, severe snowstorms hit southern China during Spring Festival, the nation’s most important holiday. Local media initially downplayed the crisis, following the government’s cue; Premier Wen Jiabao was later forced to apologize for the government’s slow response.”* Besides allowing access to the media, the government made sure that it controlled the messages that were going to the public. Press centers were set up in Sichuan for easy access of official information and journalists were given support wherever need arose, like provision of transport. Where information surfaced and it was not consistent with the message the government wanted to go out, instead of being defensive like in Lhasa, the government offered its own version of what was happening. There was professionalism and maturity in the way the Chinese government handled the media in the Sichuan crisis. Commentators who just two months ago had bashed China for behaving backwardly in Lhasa were now out praising China.

Foreign journalists who only came to China in the past 10 years, while acknowledging the points the government scored by allowing the media to report the earthquake freely, indicated that they were put off when two weeks later officials started trying to deny reporters access to certain affected people. Ja from M2 who has been in China since 2004 believes that the Chinese government’s allowing journalists to report in Sichuan was by default not design. Ja said being a disaster, the government had set its priorities straight, and that was to focus on saving lives and ensuring that people were safe. In other words if this incident was like a riot, journalists would have been barred again. Ja said this is why when the rescue effort started easing, the government turned its attention on the media and tried to keep them out, probably regretting having given them a chance in the first place. *“The fact that there being so many foreign journalists meant that the whole world attention was focused so the bureaucracy was not able to do petty squabbling...so of course at first they should be focusing on rescuing people and not kicking out journalists, then they started shooing people away from places, pushing people away trying to block in a few cases. There were numerous cases of reporters going to interview parents and having both the journalist and the parents being harassed by the Police, harassed by thugs...”* While understanding the logic behind the reasoning of foreign correspondents that are relatively new to China, correspondents who have been in China for decades hold a different view. Veteran

correspondents to China believe that the Chinese government, while remaining tough and uncompromising about its stand on foreign correspondents' coverage of Lhasa riots, was still pondering how it could handle its media relations better next time. When the earthquake occurred, while it was a major disaster to China, the government also saw it as an opportunity to test some media strategies as learned from the mistakes made in Lhasa. *"...I kind of disagree with the notion that the Chinese did not stop us after the earthquake because they could not do it. I think the Chinese government can stop us if they want to stop us even in spite of the earthquake, even though they may be busy with the earthquake there are different sets of officials who can still stop us. So, I think they did not stop us because it was a decision to allow us in just like they allowed the Chinese media to cover the earthquake."*

Allowing foreign journalists to cover the Sichuan earthquake unrestricted was a huge risk and the Chinese government officials must have been holding their breaths the whole time. Being the first time that the government had opened up to foreign media and the issue under coverage being as sensitive as a devastating earthquake, the Chinese government needed to have a good first time experience. Looking at past trends, the Chinese government would have folded up again if there was the remotest sign of bad publicity through negative stories by foreign media. Because the coverage of the crisis was very positive at the beginning, confidence increased among officials so much so that when later on some negative stories emerged, officials were able to find solutions, none of them being resorting to shutting out foreign correspondents again. There was evidence of blocking journalists from interviewing victims, especially parents of dead schoolchildren and in a few cases harassment. This was an anti-climax to an otherwise well handled media relations and it is obvious that the Chinese government learned from it. Despite the ambiguity at the end, the Chinese government found more benefits than regrets from allowing the media to roam free and this provided a forward momentum in its relationship with foreign journalists. When the Olympics finally hit town on August 8, 2008, both sides had a good feeling for each other, a very essential ingredient for successful hosting of the Games.

The opening ceremony was a world-class display and the world media talked about it for days. The Games progressed without a hitch. Each day that went by, the clock ticked off the minutes leading to the end when everyone would leave Beijing as resident foreign journalists stay to see the lock placed back on the freedom they had been enjoying for over a year. On October 17, 2008, when it was announced at a press conference that Premier Wen had signed to make the Olympic rules permanent, there was a mixture of emotions. For some it was a confirmation of something they had seen coming while for others it was unbelievable seeing China taking such a bold step. What

was common for both though was that life for foreign correspondents in China would never be the same again. Je from M3 puts it this way, *“If you read the fine print, there were two points that I think were missed by most journalists, but are important to note. One was that it is now written in the regulations that ‘China adopts a basic state policy of opening up to the outside world, [and] protects the lawful rights ... of foreign journalists.’ This may sound like an empty statement, but this is their stated policy. Another point is that there appears to have been a rhetorical shift. Under the old regulations for foreign journalists, there was more of a sense that the authorities were trying to control us, while the new regulations emphasize they’re trying to facilitate our ability to do our job.”*

## **Interpretation**

In the effort to establish what impact the 2008 Beijing Olympics had on the Chinese government’s relationship with foreign correspondents, the study almost became myopic in its approach and attitude as it was pulled into the long history of a very turbulent relationship between the two. It was very easy to dismiss most of the changes and developments that were observed as just mere eventuality “had to happen” events on which nothing could be based to understand a phenomenon or late alone use to make interpretations and draw conclusions. At the nascent stage of the study, arguments were raised that China’s behavior towards foreign journalists before and during the Olympics was unavoidable because engaging foreign media came in the package of the Olympic Games. The arguments further pointed out that the Chinese government had to be “nice” to foreign correspondents because successful hosting of the Games depended on it and realizing this, China went ahead and introduced the temporary lifting of restrictions in 2007. This line of contending continued to say that the handling of the Sichuan earthquake was just China’s way of trying to keep foreign journalists in “a good mood” so that they could portray China positively in their coverage of the Olympic Games. All these arguments sounded plausible but they lost all turgidity once the study looked at China’s handling of foreign journalists in post-Olympic incidents. China is one of the few successful communist countries in the world, a characteristic that has never endeared it to most of the international community, especially the West, which holds a different and almost completely opposite political view. It is obvious that China believes in its political and government system, and so far it has demonstrated that the system works for the country and its people. Despite this, much of the West has a historically entrenched stereotypical opinion that the Chinese system is wrong. In an effort to sell the Western way of life and political system as the most preferred and therefore the right way to govern, those given to political rhetoric have always branded China as suspicious, dishonest, oppressive and manipulative. These views and sentiments

slipped into the Western media and its reporting has always reflected the same. The Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party have had very bad experiences with foreign media in terms of how they are portrayed. Instead of alleviating this, the opening up policy seemed to only aggravate the situation. Coming from this background, China could have easily and justifiably only been accommodative to foreign correspondents for the purposes of the Olympic Games and shut them out again as soon as the Games ended. Realizing the global status that it has, which the Olympic Games helped to confirm, China decided to take a risk, the same way it did over three decades ago when Deng Xiaoping reasoned that it does not really matter whether the cat is black or white, if it catches mice it is a good cat. One would not be considered utterly out of line to argue that before 1978 China was fully aware that for the country to prudently utilize its enormous potential and make progress it needed to open up to the larger world community. Chinese leaders knew that if China wanted to become an active participant in world affairs and succeed at it, the country should look beyond the Great Wall and learn from other countries' economies and at the same time allow the international community to come into China and learn the Chinese way of doing things. Yet that notwithstanding, China remained shut because it was not ready to open up. When the time was right though, and the reform and opening up policy was adopted, China was synonymous with up and coming industrialization, a flourishing agricultural sector, speedy infrastructure development, promising technological innovations, overwhelming private sector investment and improving living standards. All these were punctuated with an ever growing double-digit gross domestic product. Just like before opening up, post-Deng Chinese leaders have been aware of the need to engage more with foreign correspondents by taking away restrictions and allowing them more freedom. Over the past 30 years Chinese leaders have been fully aware that in order to achieve global power status complete with the respect and glory that comes with it, China would need to open up more by granting foreign journalists wider and uninterrupted access to party and government leaders as well as ordinary Chinese citizens. Once again in spite of this realization China maintained its position until its leaders felt that they were ready.

The picture that this study has drawn through the analysis provided by the research results and the three case studies used, shows that in 2001 China consciously stepped into another path of change. In his pragmatic look at doing things, Deng Xiaoping expressed the principle of 摸着石头过河- Mōzhe shítou guòhé (*crossing the river by feeling the stones*). In the same spirit the Chinese government was aware of both its goals and the risks and challenges that would come with walking along the path taken. By the time it called its first press conference to start the journey to Beijing Olympic Games, the

Chinese government had weighed the gains and the losses, it had examined its options and alternatives and put in place ways to deal with whatever consequences would arise. Temporary lifting of restrictions in 2007 was done to conform to Olympic standards but also that if allowing foreign correspondents access proved catastrophic, reverting to the old system after the Games should be viewed as expected since the arrangement was just temporary.

Making the Olympic rules to be permanent was proof that the Chinese government was willing to ignore the painful areas of opening up to foreign correspondents and focus on the strengths. The test of this new resolve was Urumqi in 2009. This was the first major incident that took place after October 17, 2008 and foreign correspondents experienced cooperation from Chinese officials that they had never experienced outside of the Olympic Games. For security reasons communication in Xinjiang was blocked but a hotel was set aside with Internet and phone access and a media centre for journalists. Besides that, reporters had access to any relevant official and victims they wanted to interview for as long as the crisis stayed. The way that the Chinese government interacted and engaged with the foreign press in Urumqi was testimony that the China that foreign correspondents would witness after the Olympic Games would be a different one. The old was gone and the new had come. Jb observed that *"This was progress to me and I told the officials then that it's still better for them that they allow us to cover the news because in the end because we were there and we were able to interview people, including eye witnesses, we were kind of...the Chinese were able to tell their side of the story which meant that there was very little space for rumors and speculation as to what actually happened. You know, soon after it happened people said it was a massacre, the local police shot at people, but through our interviews it became obvious that the violence was committed by the rioters out in the streets and not the authorities. So, they probably should look back at this as a positive example that if you allow in the foreign media to see for themselves what happened and to report what they see and what they hear and to allow them to freely interview people, it's actually in their favor if they have nothing to hide."*

## **Conclusion**

This study departed on the premise that there were a lot of changes that the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games brought to Chinese society. Singling out China's relationship with the media, the study has managed to explore and examine how the Chinese government relates with foreign correspondents and how the Olympics impacted the relationship. In conclusion to this paper, the study finds it important to answer the questions raised by the research in specific terms so that the report closes without leaving any doubt that the

study has achieved its goals. In this light the study concludes, with support of views expressed by both foreign journalists and Chinese government officials, by looking at each research question in the introduction. Actually all questions can be combined as two:

### **What impact did the 2008 Beijing Olympics have on Chinese government's relationship with foreign correspondents?**

Describing China 2010 as a country that has changed would be a huge understatement because it would rob the country of the reality of what has really happened. The best and probably the right description of China in 2010 is a country that has been transformed at every level. Already China has enjoyed a few years of being identified as a model economy. In most of the changes that have taken place, every level achieved its transformation due to a "trigger" effect. In other words, there was an event or a situation that set off a process of change. For example, the increase in HIV infections in the 1980s led to a change of health policy towards China's homosexual community. China's joining of the WTO in 2001 opened up business opportunities never before enjoyed with the international community. The SARS crisis led to the establishment of communication systems that would effectively respond to health emergencies. Every major change had a trigger that set it off. Likewise China's restrictive policies on foreign correspondents would not have lived forever, sooner or later there would be a reason compelling enough to make the government rethink its position. As observed in the study, China's opening up in 1978 was the opening of the flood gates of transformation that the country would experience in a long time. After 1978 there was no way that China would remain the same, probably the only question would be whether it would change to better or worse. This meant that the government needed to be attuned to recognize events and situations that demanded change of doing things and respond accordingly. By winning the bid to host the Olympic Games China had just acknowledged once again that time for more change had come and this turn was for its relationship with foreign correspondents. The Olympic Games provided the right environment or the right reason for the Chinese government to rethink its foreign reporters' policies. It could be possible that all along before winning the Olympics bid plans were on the table to scrape off restrictions on foreign correspondents but a "plausible reason" for doing it was lacking. It is unlikely that the Chinese government would just one day announce that foreign correspondents no longer required permission to travel around China. The Olympic Games, more than any other event in Chinese history, made the government realize where China really was in world affairs and how much that position was not fitting because of a number of factors, the major of them being its relationship with foreign

correspondents. The Games opened the eyes of Chinese leaders to the fact that China needed foreign correspondents if its subtle rise to world dominance was to take hold. The Olympic Games showed China that wanting to rule the world and being transparent were inseparable. Je made an important observation. *"I think that the Olympics made these new regulations possible. I don't think that they would have happened—at least not this soon—without the Olympics. So I would like to say that the Olympics were important for the foreign media. I've spoken to some officials about this, who have said, you know we never would have gotten all the other ministries who don't make this a priority around the table had it not been for the Olympics. So, I do think that the Olympics were an important impetus."* It is obvious that giving foreign correspondents freedom would only benefit a few departments and ministries in the short term and this naturally made those who would not benefit to be resistant. Besides this, some departments and ministries like defense, police, health, propaganda and judiciary had had bad experiences with foreign media. They had perpetually received negative news coverage which made them wonder how much more negativity would emanate from foreign journalists if they were allowed to go anywhere and talk to anyone. But the Olympic Games were not only an international event China had asked to host, they were China's one-time chance to show and prove to the whole world that if other countries could host the Olympic Games China could do it better. This alone was reason enough to transcend any hurt feelings that some Chinese leaders and government officials may have had towards foreign correspondents. G1 noted that *"...all the officials knew that we had to have a more open mind. You cannot only stay at your office, negotiation is very important. For many years China had been weak in this area, officials did not know how to change ideas, how to negotiate, and how to explain themselves. During and after the Games, officials had to talk to the world through foreign reporters and they experienced a lot of things that changed the way they think about things and they became stronger in this area."* The Olympic Games led to the introduction of the temporary Olympic rules which got rid of restrictions and then later the adoption of the rules into law being followed now.

### **How permanent are the media policy changes made after the Olympic Games?**

Turning the Olympic rules into law on October 17, 2008 was the first indication of how seriously the Chinese government was taking the changes that had been ushered into operation before and during the Olympic Games. The Chinese government announced the permanency of the Olympic rules almost to the minute on the day when the rules were set to expire. If the government was not sure about its decision, or doubted the life span of a law that allows some freedom to foreign journalists, it would have either let the Olympic rules expire or extend the period of the rules' temporality. By making the



rules permanent the Chinese government was making a statement that it was ready to take another step in its move to embrace changes. When the Olympic rules were first announced in 2007, a lot of analysts and commentators described the decision as an experiment and they predicted that if China got stung in the process, it would not proceed with reforming its media policy. In an article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 2007, John Thornton wrote, *"One experiment that has caught the attention of many Chinese is the government's decision to allow foreign journalists to travel and report freely throughout China (with the exception of Tibet) from January 2007 through the 2008 Beijing Olympics. 'It's clearly a test,' a Chinese newspaper editor said, 'to see how the foreign press uses its new freedom. Unless something goes terribly wrong, it's hard to see how the government can reimpose the old system when the Olympics are over.'"* [Thornton, 2007] Much as these expositions are plausible, it may not be entirely right to contend that the Chinese government made the Olympic rules permanent because it could not "reimpose the old system." Rather the Chinese government, though it faced challenges like in the Tibet riots, decided not to revert to the old system because it realized the importance of staying open and accessible to foreign journalists. The Chinese government now understands how vital foreign media is and the goodness of making information available instead of hiding it. China realizes its position in the world; it does not want to behave in ways that will tarnish its image as a respectable world power. The country is moving forward and nobody wants to try and turn back the hands of time.

For close to two years now the Chinese government has been training its officials in media relations. Starting from Beijing to all the provinces, government ministries and departments have spokespersons that are charged with the responsibility of providing information to journalists. Part of their training is not just to wait until a journalist comes knocking, but to be proactive by being the first ones to contact journalists about issues. Tsinghua University and other higher learning institutions have been instrumental in these trainings. Now the issue is no longer that there is no one for reporters to talk to, rather the issue is how savvy the spokespersons are at handling the media. The motivation to provide information or not will probably just be to save jobs or to get a high position. There is an expression among Chinese authorities which says, "if you say a lot, chances are you will say something wrong, if you say a little, you could also say something wrong, but if you say nothing, chances are you will not say something wrong." Increasingly Chinese authorities are taking recognizance of the fact that they can no longer fully control information as was the case in the past. Jc observed that *"It is not the CCP or the government that is changing things, it is the people and the media who are demanding freedom and authorities have learned to back-off and be tolerant. Once upon a time the Chinese government controlled every aspect of people's lives, food, clothes and shelter, but*

*now its hands off. Things are changing and improving in China a lot.*" As Chinese citizens enjoy the benefits that come with free media like increased transparency and accountability, they will demand more freedom and soon remaining media restrictions will be lifted and who knows, Tibet may no longer be a restricted region for foreign correspondents.

Almost all foreign correspondents were on one side before China took off the restrictions, they all looked at every Chinese government move with negativity. However, the current freedom has divided the foreign media into two camps. There is what is known as the "Panda Huggers," foreign media organizations or journalists that are deemed to be sympathetic towards China. They write news stories aimed at "pleasing" the Chinese government. The other group is called "China Bashers" and as the name suggests, these are journalists who are bent on being critical of and are opposed to the Chinese government. Naturally this group of the media includes anti-China campaigners like Falun Gong, activists for an independent Tibet and Xinjiang.

It is also important to mention that the easing of rules for foreign journalists in China has paved the way for the introduction of some laws that have lifted some restrictions on domestic Chinese media. While foreign reporters were not allowed to travel around China without permission, it was illegal for Chinese journalists to report on emergencies like natural disasters and accidents without seeking prior approval from the government. These restrictions explain why the Chinese media could not report the Great Tangshan earthquake in 1976 and the delays that characterized the reporting of SARS in 2003 and the snowstorm that hit southern China during Spring Festival in 2007. As the government of China introduced the Olympic rules, the National People's Congress (NPC) revised the "Crisis Management Regulation," dropping the requirement for Chinese reporters to get permission first before reporting a crisis. These changes motivated the Chinese government to seriously consider its freedom of information regulations, or "sunshine laws" as they are most commonly referred to in many countries. These are laws that guarantee public access to information held by the state. On April 5, 2007, the State Council of the CCP adopted the "Regulation of the People's Republic of China on Open Government Information" which became effective on May 1, 2008. Among other provisions that directly benefit or affect Chinese journalists in the regulation are Article 4 which states that *"The people's government at all levels and the departments of the people's governments at the county level and above should establish and perfect systems for open government information work for their respective administrative agencies and designate an office (hereafter referred to as the 'office for open government information work') to be responsible for the daily work of open government*

*information for their respective administrative agencies.” In Article 5 it is provided that “When disclosing government information, administrative agencies should observe the principles of justice, fairness, and convenience to the people.” Article 6 says “Administrative agencies should disclose government information promptly and accurately. When administrative agencies discover false or incomplete information that affects or might affect social stability and disturbs the social management order, they should release, within their scope of responsibility, accurate government information to clarify the situation.” Article 7 provides that “Administrative agencies should establish and perfect a coordination mechanism for releasing government information. When releasing government information that involves other administrative agencies, an administrative agency should communicate and confirm with the administrative agencies concerned to ensure the government information released is accurate and consistent. If the government information to be released by administrative agencies needs to be approved in accordance with relevant state regulations, it may not be released without being approved.” And in Article 8 the regulation states that “The government information disclosed by administrative agencies may not endanger state security, public security, economic security and social stability.” Since the implementation of this regulation in 2008, the Chinese media has been able to report on never-before-public issues like corruption, accidents resulting from neglect and financial mismanagement by government and party officials. Though Chinese journalists still face other restrictions, there is increasing hope that as China continues to get global recognition because of its ever accelerating development; the government will be compelled to get rid of regulations that are not consistent with international norms.*

## **Recommendations**

That China is a country that has transformed so much in a very short time is an observation made several times in this study and by others in countless other studies and academic works. It is important that when making this observation there should be cognizance of what this transformation entails. Careful attention must be put on looking at what about China has transformed and to what extent. The changes in economy that have translated into modern infrastructure, availability of food, advanced technology, good education and overall rise in people’s living standards are the obvious topics of discussion. However, there are several areas that do not seem to be transforming at the same pace and in consistency with the rest of the change taking place in the country. Reform of laws that govern the media in China is very slow. While China is lauded for giving freedom to foreign journalists, in the same breath China must be rebuked for keeping the domestic media under control. It does not sound and look right that foreign reporters are allowed to report freely on certain issues while domestic journalists are

prohibited from reporting the same. In this light, this study makes the following recommendations as potential ways through which China can enhance its media relations.

1. Stopping domestic reporters from discussing certain issues does not erase the issues from the public's mind. Media silence on issues deemed sensitive only serves to postpone public debate on the issues but does not cancel it. After prohibiting foreign journalists from free travel around China for a very long time, the Chinese government finally realized that restriction was not the best way and began to train spokespersons to talk to the media intelligently. In the same way, the government of China should let the domestic media report about "sensitive" issues but must find ways to handle the public debate that will ensue. With advanced technology most Chinese citizens are able to bypass the Great Firewall that blocks foreign websites that carry news stories on issues that are not allowed to be reported on in China. This means that while the government thinks that by stopping domestic journalists from reporting on certain issues it is controlling what people know, actually most people know but they just lack the opportunity to talk. In this time and age, a country that is poised to be a world leader like China must not rely on restrictions on the media to control public debate, rather it should find ways of encouraging healthy and constructive public discourse.
2. Shutting foreign journalists out of Tibet is one of the reasons China's image is still being demonized in some quarters of the Western media. The strides that China made in introducing the Olympic rules are undermined every time one remembers that there is still a part of China that foreign media still need approval to visit. Every time something negative comes up in the foreign media about Tibet, the Chinese government is quick to point out that the news is false, inaccurate or just part of propaganda by groups bent on instigating separatist ideas in Tibet. If this is true why doesn't the government allow the journalists to go and see for themselves? The only best way to prove critics wrong on Tibet is not to stop them from going into the region as this only helps to fuel the fires of suspicion and lends credence to the notion that perhaps there is indeed something the government is doing in Tibet that it does not want the world to know. As long as Tibet remains closed to foreign media, the more the international community will speculate about the region and the more bad press China will receive. All this equals a bad image for China, undermining all the other things that the country is doing.

3. It is estimated that between 2007 and 2009 the Chinese government had 1,500 spokespersons, and interactions with the media through press conferences increased to 1,800 press conferences annually. These statistics are outstanding and a clear demonstration of how seriously the Chinese government is taking its development and cultivation of good media relations. China being a country that is always changing, the public's demand for information increases, making the need for intelligent and competent spokespersons a necessity. Training of spokespersons must continue at every level of the Chinese government to ensure that the media is given information timely and fast. This will also help in changing the unfortunate behavior of provincial officials who are still resistant to change. The central government in Beijing cannot be saying, "we are open to foreign journalists," while provincial governments are shutting the foreign journalists out.

### **Limitations of the study**

Several challenges encountered in the course of researching for this study have affected the depth and richness of the study. The biggest limitation to this study was the unwillingness by some foreign journalists to participate in the study by providing information. Some foreign journalists said they did not find it safe to discuss their relationship with the Chinese government. Assuring the journalists that the study would respect their privacy needs by concealing their identities and that of their organizations did not help. Government officials were actually very frank and open in the interviews. It seemed they should get to know each other better and I hope this paper will play some role in decreasing the fear and promoting the understanding.

### **Further research**

This study has only looked at one aspect of the relationship between the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and the media. There are other areas on this that can make topics for further interesting research. Following are some ideas:

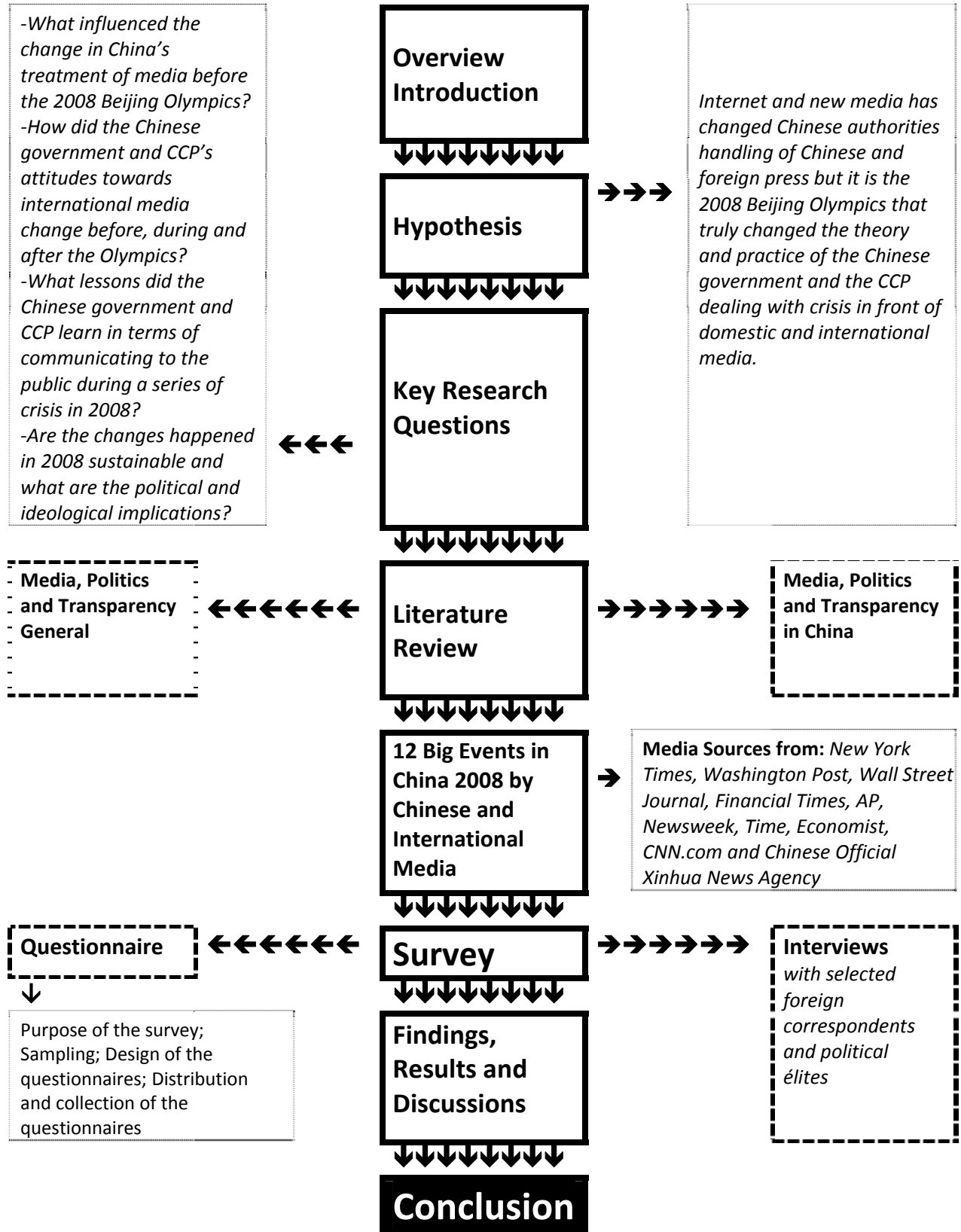
- A study can be done to look at how foreign journalists and domestic Chinese media related in reporting the Olympics. Did they approach reporting of the Games with a collaborative spirit or a competition?
- This study looked specifically at relations between foreign reporters and the Chinese government. Another study can look at how the Beijing Olympics impacted the relationship between Chinese journalists and the Chinese government.

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# Appendix 1

## Structure of the Research



## Appendix 2



# Transparent Governance in 2008 *An Evaluation by Journalists* Questionnaire

by  
Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University  
Global Journalism Institute, Tsinghua University  
2010

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*\*Information collected from this survey will be used for a study at Harvard and Tsinghua universities on transparent governance in China in the year of 2008. This study will especially evaluate the Chinese government's efforts in giving foreign press more access to the sudden emergencies in China with a timely manner according to its new law and regulations. All personal data in this questionnaire will be regarded as strictly confidential and for academic research only. The published research paper should never mention the individual journalists' name and organization when a specific content is derived from this questionnaire.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Section I: Personal Information**

1: Sex male female

2: Age under25 26-35 36-45 46-55 above55

3: Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

4: Education High School Higher Education Graduate Degree Doctoral Others

5: How many years of professional journalistic experiences do you have?

1-3 3-5 5-10 10-15 15 or over

6: Your Chinese language skill can be described as:

Fluent/Native Intermediate Fundamental None

7: How long have you stayed in China since your first arrival? (years) \_\_\_\_\_

8: Visa Type \_\_\_\_\_ since when (year) \_\_\_\_\_ for how long (years) \_\_\_\_\_

9: Have you ever been deported by China? Yes No

If yes, please provide details including date, location and why.

\_\_\_\_\_



10: Have you ever been rejected a journalistic visa to enter China? Yes No  
If yes, please provide details including date, location and why.

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**Section II: About your Organization/Institution**

11: Nationality of your organization \_\_\_\_\_

12: Media type Newspaper Magazine Radio/TV Agency New Media Others

13: How frequently do you have to write/report for your organization?

Once a day Once a week Once a month Not sure

14: How many offices/bureaus does your organization have in Mainland China now? \_\_\_\_\_

15: Is your China head bureau located in Beijing now? Yes No

16: How many journalist staff does your organization have in China now?

Only myself 2-3 4-5 6-10 10-19 more than 20

**Section III: Your experiences when covering the following 12 events in 2008**

17-29 Have you/your organization covered the following events?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>1] Winter storms</b> 25 January - 6 February 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>2] March 14 riots in Lhasa</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>3] Hand-foot-mouth disease (HFMD)</b> March-May 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>4] Train crash accident in Shandong</b> 24 April 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>5] Wenchuan earthquake</b> 12 May 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>6] Xinjiang terrorists killed 17 police</b> 4 August 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>7] The 2008 Beijing Olympic Game</b> 8-24 August 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>8] Tainted milk scandal in Hebei Province</b> September to December 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>9] The Shanxi Xiangfen County mudslide accident</b> 14 September 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>10] Subway tunnel construction site collapse</b> 15 November 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>11] China's first space walk</b> 27 September 2008
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>12] Direct air and sea transport and postal services across the Taiwan Strait</b> 3-7 November

30: Have you ever been refused to cover any of the above events? Yes No

If yes, please provide details including date, location, by whom/what organization and why.

---

31: Do you have any comments to make when you cover any of the above events in 2008?  
Comments:

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**Section IV: New Regulations by Government on Journalists Covering China**

Premier Command 477 (January 2007)

32: Have you heard about it? Yes No

33: Do you think it works in central ministries from your experience? Yes No

If your answer is no, why?

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34: Do you think it works in local governments from your experience? Yes No

If your answer is no, why?

---

Premier Command 537 (October 2008)

35: Have you heard about it? Yes No

36: Do you think it works in central ministries from your experience? Yes No

If your answer is no, why?

---

37: Do you think it works in local governments from your experience? Yes No

If your answer is no, why?

---

Transparent Governance Act

38: Have you heard about it? Yes No

39: Do you think it works in central ministries from your experience? Yes No

If your answer is no, why?

---

40: Do you think it works in local governments from your experience? Yes No

If your answer is no, why?

---

**Section V: Finally**

41: Do you agree that the Chinese government and CCP's attitudes towards international media changed before and during the Olympics? Yes No

42: What do you think *the most* influenced the change in China's treatment of media before the 2008 Beijing Olympics?

The fast growing population of Internet users in China

The rise of middle class in the big cities

The Communist Party and Government's agenda

The Olympic Rule

43: The changes happened in 2008 that Chinese government dealt with media transparently in disasters and crisis, will be sustainable. Do you agree? Yes No

Please provide with your reasons:

---

44: Other situations that you think should be presented and explained:

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

*For any enquiries, please contact Dr. Steven Dong through <steven\_dong@hks.harvard.edu> or <steven.dong@tsinghua.edu.cn>.*

## Appendix 3

### **Premier Command 537, State Council, People's Republic of China (to replace PC477)**

#### ***Regulations of the People's Republic of China Concerning Reporting Activities of Permanent Offices of Foreign Media Organizations and Foreign Journalists***

**Article 1.** The present regulations are formulated for the purpose of facilitating reporting activities of permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists in the People's Republic of China carried out in accordance with the laws of China and promoting international exchanges and the dissemination of information.

**Article 2.** Permanent offices of foreign media organizations mentioned in the regulations refer to branch offices established in China by foreign media organizations for news coverage and reporting.

Foreign journalists mentioned in the regulations include resident foreign journalists and foreign reporters for short-term news coverage. Resident foreign journalists refer to career journalists dispatched by foreign media organizations to be stationed in China for than six months for news coverage and reporting. Foreign reporters for short-term news coverage refer to career journalists who come to China and stay for no more than six months for news coverage and reporting.

**Article 3.** China adopts a basic state policy of opening up to the outside world, protects the lawful rights and interests of permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists in accordance with law, and facilitates their news coverage and reporting activities that are carried out according to law.

**Article 4.** Permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists shall abide by the laws, regulations and rules of China, observe the journalism ethics, conduct reporting activities objectively and impartially, and shall not engage in activities which are incompatible with the nature of the organizations or the capacity of the journalists.

**Article 5.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the Foreign Ministry) is the competent authority in charge of affairs concerning permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists in China. The State Council Information Office and other government departments are in charge of relative affairs concerning permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists within their respective responsibilities.

Foreign Affairs Offices of local people's governments, commissioned by the Foreign Ministry, deal with affairs concerning permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists within their respective administrative areas. Information offices of local people's governments and other departments are in charge of relative affairs within their respective

administrative areas concerning permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists within their respective responsibilities.

**Article 6.** Foreign media organizations wishing to establish permanent offices or send resident journalists to China need to seek approval of the Foreign Ministry.

**Article 7.** Foreign media organizations wishing to establish permanent offices in China shall submit the following documents to the Foreign Ministry directly or through a Chinese diplomatic mission abroad:

1. Written application signed by the head of the headquarter;
2. Introduction of the media organization concerned;
3. Introduction of the head of the permanent office to be established, journalists and other staff members to be dispatched to China;
4. A copy of the registration certificate of the said media organization issued by its home country.

**Article 8.** Upon approval of the application to establish permanent office in China, head of the permanent office to be set up shall, within 7 working days of his/her arrival in China, register with the Foreign Ministry upon presentation of his/her passport to obtain the Certificate for Permanent Office of Foreign Media Organization in China; head of a permanent office of a foreign media organization to reside in a place other than Beijing shall, within 7 working days of his/her arrival in China, register with relevant foreign affairs offices of the local people's governments commissioned by the Foreign Ministry upon presentation of his/her passport to obtain the Certificate for Permanent Office of Foreign Media Organization.

**Article 9.** Foreign media organizations wishing to send resident journalists to China shall submit the following documents to the Foreign Ministry directly or through a Chinese diplomatic mission abroad:

1. Written application signed by the head of the headquarter;
2. Introduction of the journalist to be sent;
3. A copy of the career journalist certificate of the said journalist in his/her home country.

In case of one resident journalist to be sent by two or more foreign media organizations, these agencies shall submit separate applications according to the provisions of the preceding paragraph and note in their respective applications other foreign media organizations represented concurrently by the said journalist.

**Article 10.** Upon approval of the application, foreign journalists to be sent to China shall, within 7 working days of their arrival in China, register with the Foreign Ministry upon presentation of the passport to obtain the Press Card (R); foreign journalists to reside in places other than Beijing shall, within 7 working days of their arrival in China, register with relevant foreign affairs offices

of local people's governments commissioned by the Foreign Ministry upon presentation of the passport to obtain the Press Card (R).

Upon obtaining the Press Card (R), foreign journalists shall register with the public security authorities of their residence place to obtain a residence permit.

**Article 11.** The permanent office of a foreign media organization shall submit a written application to the Foreign Ministry for change of its name, place of residence and other relevant matters. Upon approval, the said foreign media organization can go through the necessary procedures for the change accordingly.

The permanent office of a foreign media organization shall notify the Foreign Ministry in written form of replacement of its head, change of office address and other relevant matters within 7 working days. Foreign media organizations based in a place other than Beijing shall, within 7 days of the replacement, notify the relevant foreign affairs offices of the local people's governments commissioned by the Foreign Ministry in written form of replacement of its head, change of office address and other relevant matters.

**Article 12.** Resident foreign journalists shall submit an application to the Foreign Ministry or relevant foreign affairs offices of the local people's governments commissioned by the Foreign Ministry for renewal of their Press Card (R) before it expires. Any delay in application will be automatically deemed as waiving his/her status as resident foreign journalist and the Press Card (R) will be cancelled accordingly.

**Article 13.** The permanent office of a foreign media organization deciding to terminate its operation in China shall notify the Foreign Ministry 30 days prior to the termination, and have its Certificate for Permanent Office of Foreign Media Organization in China and the Press Card (R) of its resident journalists cancelled at the Foreign Ministry or relevant foreign affairs offices of the local people's governments commissioned by the Foreign Ministry within 7 working days upon the termination of its business.

The permanent office of a foreign media organization will be deemed to automatically terminate its reporting activities in case no resident journalists are sent for more than 10 months consecutively, and the Certificate for Permanent Office of Foreign Media Organization in China will be cancelled accordingly.

The Press Card (R) will be cancelled should a resident foreign journalist reside in China for less than 6 months per year on an accumulative basis. The permanent office of a foreign media organization shall, before the departure of its resident journalists, have their Press Card (R) cancelled at the Foreign Ministry or the relevant foreign affairs offices of the local people's governments commissioned by the Foreign Ministry.

**Article 14.** The cancellation of the Certificate for Permanent Office of Foreign Media Organization or the Press Card (R) shall be notified to the public.

The Journalist Visa of the journalist whose Press Card (R) is cancelled will expire automatically 10 days after the cancellation.

The journalist whose Press Card (R) is cancelled shall, within 10 days of cancellation, bring the relevant certificate to local public security authorities to apply for change or visa of resident permit.

**Article 15.** Resident foreign journalists or foreign reporters coming to China for short-term news coverage shall file applications for journalist visa with a Chinese diplomatic mission abroad or visa agencies authorized by the Foreign Ministry.

**Article 16.** For foreign journalists wishing to come to China to cover a visit by the head of state, head of government, head of the legislative body, members of the royal family or senior government officials of their home country, the Foreign Ministry or relevant department of the country concerned shall apply on their behalf to Chinese diplomatic missions abroad or visa agencies authorized by the Foreign Ministry for journalist visas.

**Article 17.** Foreign journalists wishing to interview organizations or individuals in China need to obtain their prior consent.

Foreign journalists shall carry and present their Press Card (R) or Journalist Visas for Short Visit during reporting activities.

**Article 18.** Permanent offices of foreign media organizations and foreign journalists may, through organizations providing services to foreign nationals, hire Chinese citizens to do auxiliary work. Organizations providing services to foreign nationals are designated by the Foreign Ministry or foreign affairs offices of the local people's governments commissioned by the Foreign Ministry.

**Article 19.** For reporting needs, foreign journalists may, on a temporary basis, bring in, install and use radio communication equipment after completing application procedures for approval in accordance with law.

**Article 20.** In case foreign nationals shall engage in news reporting activities in China without holding valid Press Card (R) or Journalist Visas for Short Visit, the public security authorities may order them to stop reporting activities and deal with related matters according to law.

**Article 21.** In case of violation of the present regulations by permanent offices of foreign media organizations or foreign journalists in China, the Foreign Ministry may issue them warning, suspend or stop their reporting activities, and in serious cases, revoke their Certificates for Permanent Office of Foreign Media Organizations, Press Card (R) or Journalist Visas.

**Article 22.** The permanent offices of foreign media organizations or foreign journalists that violate other laws, regulations and rules of China shall be dealt with according to law. In serious cases, the Foreign Ministry shall revoke their Certificates for Permanent Office of Foreign Media Organizations, Press Card (R) or Journalist Visas.

**Article 23.** These regulations shall come into force as of 17 October 2008. The Regulations Concerning Foreign Journalists and Permanent Offices of Foreign News Agencies promulgated by the State Council on 19 January 1990 shall expire as of the same date.

**Premier Wen Jiabao**  
**State Council, People's Republic of China**