The Historical Origins of the Nationalization of the Newspaper Industry in Modern China: A Case Study of the Shanghai Newspaper Industry, 1937–1953*

Sei Jeong Chin

Abstract

This paper explores the reasons behind the relative success of the CCP’s direct control over the news media in the early 1950s. Despite its importance in understanding the rise of despotism during the Mao era, the nationalization of the newspapers has not been fully studied. Building upon the recent studies emphasizing the adaptive nature of the CCP, this study analyzes the ownership transformation of the Shanghai newspapers from the 1930s to the early 1950s by going beyond the 1949 divide. I argue that the CCP’s relative success in

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nationalizing the Shanghai newspaper industry can be attributed to the incremental changes from the Sino-Japanese War to the early 1950s in the context of the war, postwar, and socialist revolution periods. In particular, the weakening of the Shanghai capitalists’ influence over the Shanghai newspapers during the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) was critical in the accelerated expansion of the state power during the war, postwar, and early PRC periods.

1. Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) control over the media in contemporary China remains relatively tight, despite the commercialization of the news media as a part of the media reform undertaken in the context of China’s transition to a market economy in the post-Mao era. Censorship is often at the center of controversies over media control, but the fundamental reason for the CCP’s effective control over the media can be attributed to the state’s continuing direct control over the media since the early 1950s. The CCP, after coming into power in 1949, managed to nationalize newspapers by late 1952; as a result, privately owned newspapers, which flourished during the Republican era (1911–1949), disappeared in China. Since then, the CCP has continued to have unprecedented control over the media. In this sense, the nationalization of the newspaper industry in the early 1950s is an important process in understanding the historical origins of the CCP’s media control in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

This article explores the reasons behind the relative success of the CCP’s direct control over the media in the early 1950s by tracing the historical origins of the nationalization of the Shanghai newspaper industry in the pre-1949 period. Despite its importance in understanding the rise of despotism during the Mao era, the nationalization of the newspapers has not been fully studied. A recent study on the issue by Zhang Jishun revealed the adaptive nature of the nationalization process in the broader context of the recent scholarship on the 1950s, which pays attention to the adaptive nature and the limits of the CCP’s power and revises the general perception of the 1950s as a golden age. Zhang further explained that the conflicting goals of realizing the “New Democracy (新民主主義 xin minzhu zhuyi)” and establishing an anticapitalist media industry through coercive mass campaigns made the nationalization process complex and conflicted. Zhang’s work as well as other
works on the news media in the early PRC, however, assumed a clear break with the pre-1949 period.\textsuperscript{7} This approach, simply focusing on the 1950s in explaining the consolidation of the CCP power, does not fully answer the questions of why and how the CCP could nationalize the newspapers successfully and expand its state power in such a short period, especially if we consider the fact that the CCP’s power in the early PRC was constrained and limited.

In this context, rather than examining the early 1950s as an isolated period, my research goes beyond the 1949 divide to explore the nationalization of newspaper industry as part of the longer historical process of state expansion in the 20th century.\textsuperscript{8} I argue that the CCP’s relative success in nationalizing the Shanghai newspaper industry can be attributed to the incremental changes from the Sino-Japanese War to the early 1950s in the context of the war, postwar, and socialist revolution periods. In particular, the weakening of the Shanghai capitalists’ influence over the Shanghai newspapers during the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) was critical in the accelerated expansion of the state power during the war, postwar, and early PRC periods. Parks Coble also shrewdly observed the weakening of the Shanghai capitalists during wartime.\textsuperscript{9} Morris Bian and Mark Frasier also recognized the impact of the Sino-Japanese War on the institutional changes in the postwar years.\textsuperscript{10} Once the path was set, the expansion of state power became a self-reinforcing process in the postwar period. In other words, once the central political authority took control of the Shanghai major newspapers, this path was hard to reverse. Neither the Nationalist government nor the PRC could find a reason to return the media to the hands of local elites, especially since the Chinese modern state constantly sought to prevent dissident voices from appearing in the mainstream news media. Even if the CCP intended to nationalize the newspaper industry using the model of the Soviet Union, the nationalization process might not have been as smooth as they intended were it not for the changes that took place in the pre-1949 period.

This study explores the case of Shanghai because the nationalization of the Shanghai newspapers in the early 1950s was crucial for the CCP in terms of the consolidation of state power as the Shanghai newspapers played a central role in the pre-1949 national politics. Shanghai’s case might be rather exceptional than typical in China,\textsuperscript{11} but still took up a significant part in the nationalization process because most of the largest nationally circulated newspapers of the pre-1949 period were located in
Shanghai. I do think that the experiences in the Nationalist-occupied area centered in Chongqing and the Communist-controlled area centered in Yan’an, which require further study in the future, also had a significant impact on the postwar media industry, but in this article I focus on Shanghai to demonstrate the structural changes of the newspaper industry. Furthermore, this study focuses on the ownership changes of the newspapers because ownership transformation caused critical changes to editorial policies and the management of the newspapers, most of which formed corporate structures by the 1930s. However, I leave content analysis of the newspapers for a future study, which will focus on examining the impact of ownership changes on editorial policies. Finally, by drawing on archival materials, memoirs, and newspaper clippings, I mainly analyze the takeover by the Shanghai party newspaper *Jiefang ribao* (解放日報) of *Shen bao* (申報), which was the largest privately owned commercial newspaper before 1949, but I contextualize the process as part of the CCP’s media policy and the transformation of the Shanghai newspaper industry.

2. The Sino-Japanese War as a Critical Juncture

It was during the Sino-Japanese War that important changes occurred in the Shanghai newspaper industry, especially in terms of their relations with the state. In the prewar period, the major commercial newspapers in Shanghai were owned and controlled by Shanghai capitalists, although the Nationalist Party managed to gradually expand its influence over Shanghai newspapers through measures such as censorship, press law, and so on. However, after the Japanese occupation of Shanghai in 1937, significant structural changes occurred in the Shanghai newspaper industry. Notably, the Japanese military as an occupation force wielded much more autonomous power than the Nationalist Party had in the prewar period.

There were two important changes that had a lasting impact on the nationalization process in the early 1950s: direct control by political authorities and heavier reliance on the state. First, most of the privately owned newspapers, which flourished in the prewar period, came under the direct control of the Japanese military authority and the Wang Jingwei (汪精衛) regime; as a result, Shanghai capitalists’ control over the Shanghai newspaper industry was dramatically weakened during wartime. In the first five years of the occupation of Shanghai, between 1937 and 1941, the Japanese still faced a thriving resistance media, despite Japanese
attempts to suppress the Chinese resistance journalists through arrests and political terror. This was due to the fact that the newspaper offices were located in the International Settlement, which the Japanese were unable to occupy until 1941, and newspapers could avoid Japanese censorship by registering as American, British, or other European papers. The most important changes, however, happened after the Japanese occupation of the International Settlement in 1941. In December 1941, the Japanese military entered the International Settlement and ended the period of the Solitary Island (孤島 gudao), which describes the International Settlement and the French Concession surrounded by the Japanese military during the years 1937 to 1941.\textsuperscript{13} The Japanese military either suspended or confiscated anti-Japanese newspapers.\textsuperscript{14}

Among all of the suspension and confiscation of newspapers, confiscation of Shen bao and Xinwen bao (新聞報) had the most significant implications in restructuring the newspaper industry. In the cases of Shen bao and Xinwen bao, these newspapers’ decisions to register as American corporations provided justification for their confiscation by the Japanese after the outbreak of the Pacific War against the United States. Shi Yonggeng (史咏賡), the proprietor of Shen bao, decided to leave Shanghai to take refuge in Hong Kong after the war broke out in 1937. He turned over “complete control” of Shen bao to Norwood Allman, a longtime editorial and legal advisor as well as a personal friend of his father, Shi Liangcai (史量才). According to Allman, he had full control over the newspaper as editor-in-chief until December 1941, when the Japanese seized Shen bao. In order to limit his financial liability, Allman formed an American corporation, and the paper was published by this corporation. Allman, as an American lawyer, maintained a pro-American and anti-Japanese stance of the paper, which irritated the Japanese.\textsuperscript{15} In December 1941 the Japanese confiscated Shen bao and Xinwen bao on the ground that Shen bao was registered as an American company. Seeking legal protection by registering as an American corporation actually backfired with the political changes of 1941. The Japanese confiscation of the two biggest commercial newspapers meant that China’s largest commercial newspapers became, for the first time, mouthpieces of a particular political authority.

I have not discovered historical records on whether there were changes in the corporate structure of the Shen bao and the Xinwen bao during the Japanese occupation. However, it seems that the corporate structure was intact, while the Japanese military exerted control over
personnel, management, and the editorial policies. First of all, the Japanese military appointed a Chinese collaborator, Chen Binhe (陳彬龢), a former Shen bao editor-in-chief who gained the trust of the Japanese, as the new president of Shen bao. The Japanese appointed Wu Yunzhai (吳蘊齋) as the president of Xinwen bao. According to the Shen bao office’s investigation in 1946, which was prepared for Chen Binhe’s collaboration trial, Chen Binhe was appointed president of Shen bao on 8 December 1942, after his collaboration with the Japanese as an intelligence worker for the Japanese in Hong Kong and Shanghai earlier during the war.16 The collaboration of Chen Binhe is quite a surprise because as an editor-in-chief of Shen bao in the 1930s, he was at the forefront of promoting anti-Japanese sentiment in China. He joined the Shanghai Human Rights Protection League, which was organized by the progressive Shanghai intellectuals in the 1930s.17 Like some other Chinese collaborators, Chen Binhe may have had strong resentment against Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) and his supporters, especially because Chen, as a leftist intellectual, had to leave Shen bao for promoting anti-Japanese sentiments through editorials as a result of political threats from the Nationalist Party after Shi Liangcai was assassinated.18 In any event, now the newspapers were under the control of collaborators appointed by the Japanese.

In addition, despite the appointment of the Chinese collaborators to the management of the newspapers, the Japanese still interfered in the management and editorial policies. Chen Binhe received a monthly subsidy of 500,000 yuan in military scrip from the Japanese Army,19 and often received instructions from the Japanese military. The Japanese military closely supervised editorial policy, and the management of the newspaper. For example, on 5 June 1942, the Japanese military dispatched an order to Shen bao as follows: First, the paper should be supportive of Japan and the Wang Jingwei government. Second, personnel, management, and editorial policy would be supervised by the head of the Public Information Office of the Japanese military. Third, the editorial policy should be (1) developing the spirit of Sino-Japanese cooperation; (2) propagandizing the meaning of the Greater Asia War, and emphasizing the liberation of Asian people, and the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere; (3) convincing people to acknowledge the Wang Jingwei government as the sole government representing China; and (4) cooperating with the Japanese in Shanghai.20 Even after Chen Binhe was appointed, he invited a Japanese official to be Shen bao’s advisor. The Japanese official would often write editorials and publish
them by translating them into Chinese, representing the viewpoint of
the Japanese military. 21 This kind of overt interference in editorial policies
by the political authorities was unprecedented in the Nationalist period.
As a result, Shen bao became a mouthpiece and propaganda tool for
mobilizing the Chinese masses politically, economically, and culturally
for total war, especially after the Wang Jingwei government’s entry into
the war in 1943 overtly made the Chinese people the objects of war
mobilization, and provided legitimacy of the war mobilization of the
Chinese population in central China. Particularly, editorials in Shen bao
were overtly aimed at war mobilization. In the editorial titled “Precondition
for Putting the ‘Total War (總體戰 zongti zhan )’ in Practice,” the news-
paper said, “Since the entry into the war, there is only one central objec-
tive, which is to concentrate the national human, material, and financial
resources in order to meet the new political needs and put the cooperation
with the Japanese and obligation to defend Asia into practice.” 22
Consequently, we can conclude that even if the Shanghai financiers
retained ownership, they lost their control and influence over the
personnel, management, and editorial policies during this time.

In addition to the Japanese-controlled newspapers, the Wang Jingwei
government–controlled newspapers started to dominate the Shanghai
newspaper market. Zhonghua ribao (中華日報), which was controlled
by Lin Bosheng (林柏生), the head of the Propaganda Bureau of the
Wang Jingwei government became a mouthpiece of the government by
promoting the Peace Movement. Zhonghua ribao was originally estab-
lished by Wang Jingwei in 1932 when he was a president of the Execu-
tive Yuan. Wang Jingwei dispatched Lin Bosheng, then his personal
secretary, to establish the paper. However, before the war, the paper was
not able to compete with the large newspapers, such as Shen bao and
Xinwen bao, so it maintained a low-profile position in the Shanghai
newspaper industry. However, after Wang Jingwei became the national
leader during the war, Zhonghua ribao gradually dominated the news-
paper industry, and soon became the largest newspaper. 23 Ping bao (平報),
established in September 1940, was controlled by the Zhou Fohai (周佛海)
faction. Tension between the Zhou Fohai faction and the Wang Jingwei
faction within the Wang Jingwei government is well known. Li Shiqun
(李士群), a secret agent for the Wang Jingwei regime, controlled Guomin
xinbao (國民新報). Finally, the Japanese military also established their
own newspapers, such as Xin shen bao (新申報) and Xin zhongguo bao (新
中国報).
Table 1: Daily Newspapers in Occupied Shanghai, 1944

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Founding Date</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Political Affiliation</th>
<th>Daily Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhonghua ribao</td>
<td>21 April 1932</td>
<td>Lin Bosheng/Xu Liqiu</td>
<td>Wang Jingwei faction</td>
<td>50,000–60,000(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shen bao</td>
<td>30 April 1872</td>
<td>Chen Binhe</td>
<td>Japanese Army/Navy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xin zhongguo bao</td>
<td>7 November 1940</td>
<td>Yuan Shu</td>
<td>Japanese Special Agency (新亞建國運動 xinya jianguo yundong)(^b)</td>
<td>50,000(^c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinwen bao</td>
<td>17 February 1893</td>
<td>Wu Yunzhai</td>
<td>Japanese Army/Navy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping bao</td>
<td>1 September 1940</td>
<td>Jin Xiongbai</td>
<td>Zhou Fohai faction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guomin xinbao</td>
<td>22 March 1940</td>
<td>Li Shiqun/Hu Lancheng</td>
<td>Military Special Service</td>
<td>15,000–20,000(^d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xin shen bao</td>
<td>October 1937</td>
<td>Ōita Yoich</td>
<td>Japanese Military</td>
<td>20,000(^e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Shen bao nianjian* (Shen bao Yearbook) (Shanghai: Shen bao she, 1944); Allman Norwood, *Stanford Hoover Institution Archives*, box 22-29 (Shen bao); Ma Guangren, *Shanghai xinwenshi* (History of the Shanghai Media) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1996).

Notes:  
\(^{c}\) Ma Guangren, *Shanghai xinwenshi*, p. 883.  
\(^{d}\) Jiang Xiaoguang, “Li Shiqun yu guomin xinwen she” (Li Shiqun and Guomin xinwen she), in *Shanghai wenshi ziliao cungao huibian*, Vol. 3 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), p. 360.  
\(^{e}\) Ma Guangren, *Shanghai xinwenshi*, p. 877.

As a result, the landscape of the Shanghai newspaper industry changed dramatically after the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941. Most of the privately owned commercial newspapers, which used to dominate the Shanghai newspaper market, came to their demise, and newspapers under the direct control of the political authorities, either the Japanese military or the Wang Jingwei faction, began to dominate the Shanghai newspaper industry.
Second, the Shanghai newspaper industry grew much more dependent on the state authority for raw materials and resources under the special circumstances of the war. In this context, the collaborationist government gradually managed to establish a centralized planning and coordinating organization for the newspaper industry. The Wang Jingwei government established the Central Newspaper Management Office (中央報業經理處 Zhongyang baoye jingli chu; hereafter CNMO) under the Propaganda Bureau. The CNMO attempted to collect statistics based on reports from the newspaper office on the monthly circulations, revenue, expenditure, and advertisements. The CNMO used the threat of suspending the distribution of newsprints in order to force the newspaper office to submit the reports.24 Because it became difficult to import newsprints from Europe or the United States after the outbreak of war, most of the newsprint was imported from Japan. Consequently, the Japanese Press Bureau and the Propaganda Bureau of the Wang Jingwei government were able to be in charge of overall planning of the distribution of newsprints to newspaper offices in central China.25 Guo Xiufeng (郭秀峰), who was an editor-in-chief of Zhonghua ribao, pointed out how the controlling of the distribution of the newsprints was one of the most important ways to gain control over the newspaper offices. In this process, the Japanese military itself exerted a considerable influence.26

For local control, the Propaganda Bureau of the Wang Jingwei government established the Newspaper Industry Improvement Committee (報業改進委員會 baoye gaijin weiyuanhui) in Nanjing, Shanghai, Suzhou, and Hangzhou in 1942. In the meeting of the committee, representatives of the newspaper offices would give reports on their newspapers. In the Shanghai District Newspaper Industry Improvement Committee, the head of the committee was Feng Jie (馮節), who was also the head of the Shanghai Branch of the Propaganda Bureau. Members of the committee included Xu Liqiu (許力求), the acting president of the Zhonghua ribao, Jin Xiongwei (金雄白), the president of Ping bao, Huang Jingzhai (黃敬齋) from Guomin xinwen (國民新聞), and Lu Feng (魯風), an editor of Xin zhongguo bao.27 The committee consisted of officials and newspaper workers. In the committee, officials from the Propaganda Bureau and the CNMO would listen to the reports of each newspaper and give orders to the newspaper workers. It seems that these committees also played a mediating role between the newspapers and the Japanese authority. In one of the meetings, the paper offices were ordered to report to the Shanghai Propaganda Bureau the deadlines for the submission of news items. The
Shanghai Branch of the Propaganda Bureau then would give the list of deadlines to the relevant Japanese so that the Japanese organization could submit the news items to the Central News Agency before the deadlines.\textsuperscript{28}

Furthermore, the Shanghai News Federation (上海市新聞聯合會 Shanghai shi xinwen lianhehui), which was supposedly a “voluntary” association of the newspaper industry equivalent to the Shanghai Daily Newspaper Association in the prewar period, was established in January 1943. The members of the Shanghai News Federation consisted of the presidents, managers, and editors-in-chief of the major large newspapers. The association aimed at requiring newspapers to take a united stance in their editorial policies through mutual communication, planning the publications of and advertisements in the newspapers, cooperating in getting news sources, and securing communication between the Japanese and the Chinese authorities.\textsuperscript{39} Before the war, the Shanghai Daily Newspaper Association played a similar role, but its nature was drastically different in that the Shanghai Daily Newspaper Association was a civilian association organized voluntarily by the members of the daily newspapers and dominated by Shi Liangcai at least until his death in 1934,\textsuperscript{30} while the Shanghai News Federation was organized by the Japanese military and the Wang Jingwei government.

In this context, the idea of the “public media system” emerged as part of the Japanese imperialist ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. The theory of “public media” emphasized the “public” nature of the media, and criticized the commercialization and commodification of newspapers in the liberal West as “privatizing,” which caused the newspapers to become tools of warlords and politicians. Lin Bosheng, as the head of the Propaganda Bureau of the Wang Jingwei government, condemned the commercialized newspaper industry as “privatization of propaganda.” Lin argued that commodification of newspapers led to the loss of the guiding power of the newspapers and made them into tools for warlords and politicians.\textsuperscript{31} Lin argued that newspaper offices should be public corporate organization (公益法人組織 gongyi faren zuzhi), in which the representatives of the government and the people of the locality should be members of the board of directors. The government should be in charge of appointments and removal of the newspaper leadership, such as presidents and important editorial staff.\textsuperscript{32} This did not mean that the idea of the public media system emerged only in the Japanese-occupied areas during wartime. In a very different ideological orientation, the Nationalist-occupied area, the
Chinese Young Journalists Society (中國青年新聞記者學會 Zhongguo qingnian xinwen jizhe xuehui), a voluntary organization of leftist journalists, actively introduced the Soviet media system in its periodical Xinwen jizhe (新聞記者 The Journalist) in the early 1940s. In one of its articles, Ge Baoquan (戈寶權), then the editor of Xinhua ribao (新華日報), said that “in the Soviet Union, newspaper industry is managed by the state, and thus can be very systemized and rationalized in terms of organizations and management.” He argued that “the newspapers in the capitalist country are a tool of the minority to create unfound rumors.”

3. Postwar Nationalist Policy

After the end of the Sino-Japanese War, the Nationalist government inherited a very different newspaper industry from the one in the prewar era. It was indeed a great opportunity for the Nationalist Party to gain stronger control over the Shanghai newspapers than it had during the prewar period. Indeed, the Nationalist Party officials were quite ready to seize the opportunity. Thus, the expansion of the state power was accelerated and developed into a self-reinforcing process in the postwar period. We can see in the following that the augmentation of state power in the postwar era was influenced by the institutional changes during wartime.

First of all, the state’s direct control over the Shanghai newspapers continued in the postwar Nationalist period, and this was mainly due to the weakening of the Shanghai capitalists’ control over the media during the Japanese occupation. The Nationalist Party, which came back from Chongqing in 1945, was easily able to take over most of the Shanghai newspapers, which were controlled by or affiliated with the Japanese military and the Wang Jingwei regime by the end of the war. All the Nationalist Party needed to do was to set the policy of suspension and confiscation of the newspapers, which collaborated with the Japanese military and the Wang Jingwei government. Only once it was proven that the newspapers had not collaborated with the Japanese and the collaborationist government would the Nationalist government give approval for them to continue publishing. Right after the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the Guomindang (國民黨, hereafter GMD) announced the plan to dispatch personnel to take over cultural industries, such as newspapers, broadcast stations, publications, and movies. According to this announcement, the Central Propaganda Department
dispatched Zhan Wenhu (詹文滸), vice president of Zhongyang ribao (中央日報), to Shanghai. His mission was to prepare the reestablishment of the GMD party newspapers, magazines, and broadcast stations, to prepare the reestablishment of the censorship system, to take over Japanese-run cultural industries, and to assist with the reestablishment of private newspapers and magazines. The Shanghai Municipal Party and Government Confiscation Committee ordered the suspension of 17 newspapers that had continued to be published in Shanghai and had propagandized for the Japanese and the Wang Jingwei government. Another legacy of wartime was the abolition of extraterritoriality in 1943. As a result, the Shanghai newspaper offices could no longer seek refuge in the foreign concession area. This made it easier for the GMD to take over the newspapers.

Confiscation of the Shanghai’s largest newspaper, Shen bao, can be understood in this context. The fact that Shen bao collaborated with the Japanese provided a justification for the Nationalists to take it over. The Nationalist Party, however, did not confiscate the paper completely. The Nationalist government took over about 40 percent of the shares from Shi Yonggeng on the grounds that Shen bao collaborated with the Japanese. Before the war, Shi Yonggeng, an original owner of a Shen bao, used to hold 80 percent of the shares, while other Shanghai notables, including Qian Xinzhi (錢新之) and Du Yuesheng (杜月笙), held 20 percent of the shares. After the confiscation, Shi Yonggeng regained 40 percent of the shares. As a result, according to Allman Norwood, Shi Yonggeng lost control of Shen bao. Chiang Kai-shek at first wanted to confiscate the newspapers completely, but through the mediation of Du Yuesheng and Chen Bulei (陳布雷), Shen bao was allowed to be published under its original name. After the Nationalist Party took over the paper, its members and close associates were appointed to their newspaper offices. Pan Gongzhan (潘公展), one of the most influential members of the C. C. Clique, a dominant faction of the Nationalist Party, in the Shanghai GMD party branch, became president and editor-in-chief of Shen bao. Chen Xunyu (陳訓愈), brother of Chen Bulei and the former head of the Shanghai News Censorship Office before 1937, became general manager of Shen bao. Not surprisingly, Du Yuesheng, a close associate of the C. C. Clique, became chairman of the board of directors of Shen bao. Cheng Cangbo (程滄波), former president of Zhongyang ribao and also a close associate of the C. C. Clique, was appointed president and
editor-in-chief of Xinwen bao. As a result, these two papers, Shen bao and Xinwen bao (新聞報), became a mouthpiece of the C. C. Clique. Just as Shen bao served as a forum for Japanese and Wang Jingwei government propaganda during the occupation, Shen bao served as a forum for the C. C. Clique in the postwar period.

In addition to taking over these newspapers, the Nationalist government restricted the publication of nonpartisan private newspapers by ordering them to register and restrict publication approval to a certain number. Furthermore, the GMD actively assisted the publication of various party and military-affiliated newspapers. Zhongyang ribao, which was directly affiliated with the Central Propaganda Department, began publication on 30 August 1945, and Zhengyan bao (正言報), affiliated with the Shanghai GMD party branch, started publishing in Shanghai on 23 August 1941.40 Dongnan ribao (東南日報), originally affiliated with the Zhejiang GMD party branch in Hangzhou, newly established itself in Shanghai via a member of the C. C. Clique, Hu Jianzhong (胡健中).41 Military-affiliated newspapers such as Qianxian ribao (前線日報) and Heping ribao (和平日報) started publication in Shanghai.

Table 2: Daily Circulations of Shanghai Newspapers, 26 February 1946

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Newspaper</th>
<th>Daily Circulation</th>
<th>Political Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xinwen bao</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>C. C. Clique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shen bao</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>C. C. Clique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagong bao</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>Political Study Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhengyan bao</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>Shanghai GMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenhui bao</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>Nonpartisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li bao</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>C. C. Clique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhongyang ribao</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>Central Propaganda Department</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SMA Q431-1-11

This, however, does not mean that the Nationalist government attempted to nationalize the whole newspaper industry. Rather, the Nationalist government allowed and even supported the reestablishment of some of the privately owned newspapers that took a resistance stance toward the Japanese military. For example, Wenhui bao (文滙報), a nonpartisan newspaper and one of the most popular resistance newspapers in occupied Shanghai, was reestablished at the end of the war with the full support of the GMD, owing to its contribution to wartime resistance.
Wenhui bao was suspended in May 1939 because of its staunch advocacy of an anti-Japanese stance. Feng Youzhen (馮有真), president of Zhongyang ribao, even helped Wenhui bao acquire a new office. However, as one of the few nonpartisan newspapers operating during the Civil War period, Wenhui bao soon turned radical. Wenhui bao actively covered student movements in both June 1946 and May 1947 and applauded the anti–Civil War movements. Wenhui bao was the first newspaper to report the Xiaguan Incident (下關事件) in June 1946, in which Shanghai citizen delegates sent to Nanjing to petition the government to stop the Civil War were beaten. The paper covered various Shanghai circles’ protests against the violence that took place in Xiaguan, and published witness accounts of the violence. Wenhui bao even published an editorial asking for the expansion of the anti–Civil War movement in June 1946. Irritated by Wenhui bao’s instigation of the anti–Civil War movements, the GMD suspended the paper in May 1947.

Second, in addition to the confiscation of newspapers, the GMD could exert their influence over the Shanghai newspapers by establishing the planning and coordinating organizations in Shanghai. The Shanghai News Party Group (上海新聞黨團 Shanghai xinwen dangtuan) was established in May 1946. Members were usually party officials, who were also presidents, general-managers, and editors-in-chief of the Shanghai newspapers. Important members included Feng Youzhen, Pan Gongzhan, Cheng Cangbo, and Chen Xunyu. It seems that the group made decisions on news policy at the local level, including censoring news and distributing newsprints. In addition, the Shanghai Newspaper Commerce and Trade Association (上海市報館商業同業公會 Shanghaishi baoguan shangye tongye gonghui) was established on 7 July 1946. This was equivalent to the Shanghai Daily Newspaper Association of the prewar period, but in the postwar era the association included broadsheet newspapers, tabloids, and evening newspapers as its members, unlike the Shanghai Daily Newspaper Association, which accepted only broadsheet newspapers as its members. On the surface, the association aimed at promoting cooperation among members, but in actuality it was in charge of allocating the newsprints and other resources that were distributed by the government. Notably, as most of the newspapers came under the control of the GMD or the military with a few exception, the board members included many influential GMD officials, such as Chen Xunyu, and Zhan Wenhu. In the postwar period, when resources including newsprints were scarce, the Shanghai newspapers were in urgent need of state
support. The newspaper industry’s reliance on the state for the supply of newsprints can be understood in the larger context of a system of quotas, which was introduced in late 1946. In this system of quotas, the companies had to rely heavily on the state in the supply of raw materials.49

Intriguingly, in the midst of the expansion of the state control over the media in the postwar period, the positive aspects of the Soviet media system were discussed even in the Nationalist-occupied area. For example, one article, titled, “China’s Road for Newspaper Industry,” published in Xinwenxue jikan (新聞學季刊 Journalism Quarterly), claimed the need for the adoption of the nationalized newspaper industry of the Soviet Union in China. The author, Zhu Peiren, argued that the Anglo-American capitalist style of media system was problematic because press freedom for everyone seemed to be allowed, but in actuality press freedom was monopolized by only a few people. According to Zhu, the Soviet Union’s media system could be the right path for China because the nationalized newspaper industry became a “public” enterprise, which advocated the national, social, and people’s interests, preventing the manipulation by the private interests of a minority of people.50 If we consider that the journal was published by the Journalism Research Association (新聞學研究會 Xinwenxue yanjiuhui) of the University of National Politics, we can infer that this kind of position did not necessarily go against the GMD’s position. When the majority of the newspapers were directly controlled by the GMD officials in the postwar period, it is not too surprising to see the discussions advocating the nationalization of newspapers in the GMD-occupied areas in the postwar period.

4. Nationalization of Shanghai Newspapers in the 1950s: Continuities and Discontinuities

The nationalization of the Shanghai newspaper industry went through a gradual process from the initial takeover in 1949 to the transformation of the remaining privately owned newspapers into joint public and private management (公私合營 gōngsī héyǐng), which completed the nationalization of newspapers by late 1952. The pattern of both the initial takeover and the nationalization process from 1949 to 1952 demonstrated that the relatively successful nationalization by the CCP was a combined result of both the gradual expansion of state control over privately owned newspapers since the wartime period and the CCP’s coercive measures through mass campaigns, such as the Thought Reform (思想改造 sīxiǎng gáizào).
It was not simply a result of the unchallenged and coercive power of the CCP in the early 1950s.

a. The Initial Takeover

When the CCP came to power in 1949, it had the urgent task of taking over the Shanghai newspapers, which had played a significant role in national politics throughout the Republican period. The News and Publication Office (新聞出版處 Xinwen chubanchu) under the Shanghai Municipal Military Control Committee (上海軍事管制委員會 Shanghai junshi guanzhi weiyuanhui) was in charge of the takeover of the Shanghai newspaper industry.51 The Military Control Committee meticulously investigated the history of each newspaper office and decided how to deal with that particular paper.

The takeover process was a tricky and complex issue because the CCP needed not only to gain its legitimacy, but also to differentiate itself from the Nationalist Party, which the CCP had constantly criticized for its harsh media policy including censorship before 1949. Zhang Jishun also pointed out that “the CCP wanted to control the media industry, but also opposed the GMD’s monopolistic management of the media industry.”52 One can see the rationale behind the CCP’s media policy in the “Preliminary Measures on the Registration of Shanghai Newspapers, Periodicals, and News Agencies,” promulgated on 20 May 1949 by the Shanghai Military Control Committee. The committee announced that its measure aimed at “guaranteeing the people’s freedom of speech and press, and depriving the counterrevolutionaries of the freedom of speech and press.”53 Under the promise of the New Democracy, the CCP seems to be genuinely implementing a United Front (統一戰線 tongyi zhanxian) policy. Based on this principle, the CCP carefully categorized the newspapers based on a meticulous investigation.54 The CCP categorized the newspapers in the cities into three political groups—reactionary, middle of the road, and progressive,55 not by the ownership of the papers, either private or public. And the CCP even supported the privately owned newspapers under the principle of the New Democracy, especially because it still needed to gain support from the privately owned newspapers, which were still influential among the Shanghai urban population. In the context of the Communist revolution against the Nationalist Party, the political categories were much more plausible and acceptable ones than the class backgrounds based on
ownership, especially when the CCP upheld the principles of the New Democracy and the United Front with the national bourgeoisie. This was quite different from the Soviet leadership, which upheld the cause of establishing an anticapitalist media system by calling for the shutdown of “bourgeois newspapers,” right after taking power in 1917.56

However, the CCP’s United Front policy toward the Shanghai newspaper industry itself does not explain why the takeover process was relatively smooth in 1949. The CCP was able to easily take over most of the newspapers except for Dagong bao (大公报), Wenhui bao, and Xinmin wanbao (新民晚报). Because most of the Shanghai newspapers were already directly controlled by the Nationalist Party, as examined earlier, the CCP could confiscate most of the Shanghai newspapers rather smoothly by simply setting the principles of confiscating the Nationalist Party organs, while allowing some privately owned newspapers published by “anti-American imperialist and anti-Nationalist Democratic Parties and civil organizations.” Based on this policy, first of all, the CCP confiscated the GMD organs and the military newspapers, including Zhengyan bao, Li bao (立報), Zhongyang ribao, Dongnan ribao, Qianxian ribao, and Heping ribao. Second, the CCP imposed military control (軍管 junguan) over newspapers such as Shen bao and Xinwen bao, which were officially privately owned yet actually controlled by the C. C. Clique. Consequently, in the case of Shen bao, the CCP took over the bureaucratic shares held by the Nationalist officials, while preserving the private shares owned by Shi Yonggeng. Even though the CCP allowed the preservation of private shares, it could basically gain direct control over the management and the editorial policy of the papers as a result of the military control. Last, the CCP supported the reestablishment of Wenhui bao and Xinmin wanbao, which maintained anti-Civil War and anti-GMD stances. Overall, as a result of the initial takeover, the CCP successfully either confiscated or directly controlled most of the major Shanghai newspapers in 1949.57

In particular, a close analysis of the confiscation process of Shen bao by Jiefang ribao demonstrates that the CCP could easily legitimize its takeover of Shen bao because of the changes that took place during wartime and the postwar Nationalist period. Jiefang ribao,58 a CCP organ, became the newspaper with the largest circulation by taking over the Shen bao office. Jiefang ribao (解放日報) was the official newspaper for the Central Committee from 1941 until 1947, when it was suspended because of the Civil War. In 1949, the Central Committee decided to use
the name of *Jiefang ribao* for the official newspaper of the Eastern China Bureau of the CCP and the Shanghai CCP Committee. Before 1949, Shi Yonggeng held 43.2 percent of the total shares, while bureaucratic shares held by the GMD officials took up 40.13 percent. Neutral shares held by non-GMD officials took up 16.6 percent of the total shares. Under these circumstances, the CCP could easily gain legitimacy in the confiscation of the bureaucratic shares, 40.13 percent.

Table 3: Shareholders of *Shen bao* under the Nationalists before 1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shareholder</th>
<th>Percentage of Shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private shares (Shi Yonggeng)</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral shares</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic shares</td>
<td>40.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: SMA A73-1-81, pp. 14–15; SMA A73-1-118; SMA 73-1-80, pp. 22–23.

Furthermore, the process of the takeover of *Shen bao* demonstrates that the CCP was far from wielding omnipotent power in its early years, and inevitably had to adopt a policy of accommodation and adaptation. In the broader context, Marie-Claire Bergere argued that the CCP’s negotiation with the Shanghai capitalists was necessary in order to gain their cooperation in economic development. She also pointed out that the CCP even “offered economic advantages and political standing to the younger scions of great families who had been left in Shanghai to watch over family assets that it had not been possible to transfer out of China.” In the case of the newspaper industry, the CCP also needed to negotiate with the remaining Shanghai capitalists, who could still exert some influence over the Shanghai newspapers. While *Jiefang ribao* could easily take over the bureaucratic shares, the neutral shares and the shares held by Shi Yonggeng was not easily confiscated. Thus, the CCP still needed to cooperate with Ma Yinliang (馬蔭良) and Wang Yaoqin (王堯欽) who exerted control over *Shen bao* before 1949. When the Culture and Education Management Committee of the Shanghai Military Affairs Control Committee (文化教育管理委員會 Wenhua jiaoyu guanli weiyuanhui) established the Coordination Committee (整理委員會 Zhengli weiyuanhui) to gain control over *Shen bao* by sorting out its stocks and the personnel, the CCP included Ma Yinliang and Wang Yaoqin on the
committee to smoothly take over the neutral shares, confiscation of which was tricky to justify. As a result of the cooperation, Jiefang ribao was able to take over 56.8 percent of the total shares of Shen bao and turned them into public shares (公股 gonggu) in 1949. Nevertheless, Shi Yonggeng retained his shares until June 1954, when his private shares were given up to the Shanghai Bank of Communication with the idea proposed by the Eastern China Financial and Economic Committee (華東財政經濟委員會 Huadong caizheng jingji weiyuanhui) that party newspapers should not contain private shares. It is not clear whether Shi’s share was sold, or “donated” without compensation. It probably was not easy for the CCP to take over Shi Yonggeng’s shares earlier, because his father, Shi Liangcai, who was assassinated for opposing the GMD policies and leading anti-Japanese movements, was respected by the leftist intellectuals and the CCP. Inevitably, even in the party organ, such as Jiefang ribao, the CCP had to allow private shares until 1954. We can infer that it was not the CCP’s unchallenged power that led to the successful nationalization.

More obvious accommodation and adaptation can be seen in the case of the CCP’s support of a few privately owned newspapers, such as Wenhui bao and Xinmin wanbao. During the postwar Nationalist period, those papers maintained independence from the Nationalist Party and were even sympathetic to the CCP, and thus the CCP had to accommodate those papers after 1949 because the CCP adopted the policy of categorizing the papers based on the political backgrounds, not on class backgrounds, as previously discussed. After 1949, in the case of Wenhui bao, Yan Baoli (嚴寶禮), the owner, still held the position of vice president and general manager, and Xu Zhucheng (徐鈞成), a former chief commentator of Wenhui bao and non-CCP intellectual, became the president and editor-in-chief. While it seemed genuine for the CCP to assist the establishment of privately owned newspapers, the CCP’s revolutionary process was constrained by the legacies from the prerevolutionary period. Three large newspapers, Wenhui bao, Xinmin wanbao, and Dagong bao, retained private ownership.
Table 4: Ownership of the Shanghai Newspapers after the CCP’s Takeover in 1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jiefang ribao</td>
<td>Public management (party organ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinwen ribao</td>
<td>Joint public and private management (<em>gongsi heying</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenhui bao</td>
<td>Private ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinmin wanbao</td>
<td>Private ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagong bao</td>
<td>Private ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laodong bao</td>
<td>Public management (party organ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qingnian bao</td>
<td>Public management (party organ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. The Nationalization Process

In comparison with the nationalization of other industries, which was completed later in 1956, the Shanghai newspaper industry’s nationalization was completed much earlier, in late 1952. This was even before Mao’s promulgation of the General Line for the Transition Period in 1953, which signaled the more radical policies in the nationalization of Chinese industry. The CCP pointed out in its promulgated measures that “newspapers, periodicals, and news agencies are kinds of tools for a particular class, party, and social organization to pursue class struggle, and thus, they are not production industry (*shengchan shiye*). Thus, the same policies that were applied to the industry and commerce cannot be applied to the private newspapers, periodicals, and news agencies.”64 In other words, the CCP emphasized the political importance of the press in the revolutionary process, and this explains partially why the nationalization of the Shanghai newspapers was completed earlier than that of other industries.

Then, how, and why was the nationalization of the Shanghai newspapers completed relatively smoothly in the earlier stage of the revolution? Even though the initial takeover led to the demise of the Shanghai’s largest newspaper, *Shen bao*, and the establishment of the party organ, *Jiefang ribao*, it seems that the CCP did not intend to risk its legitimacy by confiscating all the privately owned newspapers without acceptable cause. The CCP did not seem to have any well-defined plan of nationalizing the Shanghai newspaper industry. Nevertheless, the necessary step to complete nationalization, namely, the transformation of the remaining privately owned newspapers into joint
public-private ownership, was concluded by late 1952. Recently, Bennis Wai-yip So argued that the abolition of the private economy, which came earlier than Mao expected, was not simply a result of Mao’s abandonment of the private economy, as early scholarship claimed. Rather, the private sector was already declining under New Democracy. An attempt to boost the private economy in default of a market economy was futile. Maurice Meisner pointed out that the private sector was already dependent on the state for the allocation of raw materials to produce goods and for outlets to sell them, and private commercial firms depended on the state trading organizations for both wholesale purchases and retail sales in the early 1950s. Similar to these private industries, the Shanghai newspapers were growing more reliant on the state for finance and resources in the early 1950s, which accelerated the state’s control and the state’s planning and coordination.

After the initial takeover, the remaining privately owned newspapers went through a serious financial crisis in the first several years, and thus they were in debt and relied heavily on government subsidies and government-approved loans. For example, Wenhui bao, since its reestablishment, had suffered from chronic deficit. Wenhui bao reported a net loss of 1,394,770,000 yuan between 26 May and 31 December 1949. And from September 1950 to February 1951, to relieve the deficit of 5,400,000,000 yuan, the East China News and Publication Bureau and the Shanghai News and Publication Office signed an agreement to provide a state subsidy of 800,000,000 and asked the banks to provide a loan of 100,000,000. By May 1952, the Wenhui bao’s monthly deficit was more than 200,000,000 yuan, and by July, it increased to 250,000,000 yuan. Xinmin wanbao’s monthly deficit was 100,000,000 yuan by May 1952, and went up to 130,000,000 yuan by July 1952.

When the party papers, such as Jiefang ribao, were dominating the newspaper market and were given privileges in news gathering and financing, privately owned newspapers faced serious difficulties in their business operation. Furthermore, privately owned newspapers’ revenues from advertisements dramatically decreased because the demand for the advertisements of the industry and commerce was decreasing as the economy gradually turned into a planning system. Party newspapers such as Jiefang ribao could still gain advertisement revenues because they could publish public announcements and legal advertisements issued by the government institutions. The pressures that the publishers were under can be observed in a report of the Shanghai party
officials that said the publishers of privately owned newspapers were voluntarily considering the nationalization of their papers. According to Chen Yusun (陳虞孫), who was the secretary of the Party Cell of the Shanghai News Federation, the major shareholder of Wenhui bao, Yan Baoli, had been waiting for the nationalization of Wenhui bao,\(^75\) and Xinwen wanbao’s (新聞晚報) owner also thought of selling the paper to the government and expressed his intention to allow nationalization of the paper because of financial difficulties.\(^76\) The Shanghai Propaganda Department’s report to the Central Propaganda Department suggested the following regarding Xinmin bao (新民報)’s situation in July 1952.

The Xinmin bao’s difficulty is most serious. Monthly deficit is 130,000,000. Chen Mingde (陳銘德) expressed his intention to emulate the Beijing paper to sell to the government. The government should decide whether the paper could continue to be published. We think that it is better to push it to the dead end and takeover the mess than to takeover it now. Because of this, based on the Thought Reform Movement, the Xinwen ribao can merge with the Xinmin bao.\(^77\)

It is not certain that these publishers were genuinely willing to give up their private shares and nationalize their papers, but this demonstrates that the financial difficulties of these papers were serious enough for them to actively seek aid from the state.

Interestingly, the government was quite reluctant to provide unlimited subsidies to these private newspapers, which were suffering from chronic deficits and indeed had limited capacity to help those papers financially. As early as 1950, the CCP set the policy of running the enterprises on the commercial basis (企業化 qiyehua), which aimed at making the newspaper industry financially self-sufficient.\(^78\) This indirectly demonstrates that the CCP intended to relieve itself of the burden of having to subsidize both the public and private newspaper industry and, more important, was not financially secure enough to help the newspapers. Chen Yusun’s report also represents the general feelings of the CCP toward those papers.

Concerning the economic circumstances of the five newspapers, four newspapers (Dagong bao, Wenhui bao, Xinmin bao, Yibao) suffer from deficit except for Xinwen ribao, which gains profits. Thus, the government should provide proper aid. However, in principles, government’s subsidies cannot be used for making up for deficits in the passive manner. The
government should provide aid for the development of the newspaper works in the active way.\textsuperscript{79}

Indeed, the government’s push toward commercialization of the newspapers in the 1990s during the media reform as a result of the government’s increasing inability to subsidize newspapers had its historical precedents in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{80}

When those privately owned newspapers were facing financial difficulties, and becoming more reliant on the state, the CCP sought to gain tighter control over the privately owned newspapers by establishing planning and coordinating organizations for the Shanghai newspaper industry. After the initial takeover, the Shanghai Propaganda Bureau (上海宣传部 Shanghai xuanchuanbu) began to conduct extensive research on how to reorganize the Shanghai newspapers as early as the spring of 1950, and continually reported to Hu Qiaomu (胡乔木), the head of the General Press Administration (新闻总署 Xinwen zongshu), established under the State Council on 1 November 1949. The most important mission was to carry out the division of labor among the Shanghai newspapers. The CCP intended to have Jiefang ribao, a party organ, dominate the newspaper market, and turn other privately owned newspapers into specialized newspapers with a targeted audience. From these discussions, we do not see the evidence that the Propaganda Bureau of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee intended to nationalize the privately owned newspapers in the early years.\textsuperscript{81} Furthermore, the party cell of the Shanghai News Association (上海市新闻协会 Shanghaishi xinwen xiehui) was established on 19 July 1950. It consisted of party members who were influential in the operation of each newspaper. Chen Yusun, who was the secretary of the Military Control Committee’s Culture and Education Management Committee and vice president of Jiefang ribao, was the secretary of the party cell. This was important in controlling the Shanghai newspaper industry.\textsuperscript{82} Indeed, the party cell of the Shanghai News Association was in charge of reorganizing the private newspapers, and conducted extensive investigation into the Shanghai newspaper industry in order to set the policy for the readjustment of the Shanghai newspapers and in particular for the realization of the division of labor among the Shanghai newspapers.\textsuperscript{83}
Table 5: Shanghai Newspaper Circulation Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Jiefang ribao</th>
<th>Xinwen bao</th>
<th>Dagong bao</th>
<th>Wenhui bao</th>
<th>Laodong bao</th>
<th>Xinmin bao</th>
<th>Yi bao</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 March 1952</td>
<td>110,327</td>
<td>97,990</td>
<td>45,396</td>
<td>19,985</td>
<td>58,896</td>
<td>11,490</td>
<td>13,200</td>
<td>357,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 May 1952</td>
<td>154,415</td>
<td>99,707</td>
<td>46,774</td>
<td>35,232</td>
<td>109,458</td>
<td>13,433</td>
<td>13,430</td>
<td>472,419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>44,088</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1,717</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,376</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15,247</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50,562</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,943</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>115,135</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, planning and coordinating of the Shanghai newspapers were becoming centralized in the early 1950s. The General Press Administration was in charge of guiding the national newspaper industry and managing the state’s news organizations. Hu Qiaomu became the head of the office and Fan Changjiang (范長江) and Sa Kongliao (薩空了) became vice-heads of the office. The office was in charge of enforcing the news policies of the party and the government. The General Press Administration also hosted the National Newspaper Management Conference (全國報紙經理會議 Quanguo baozhi jingli huiyi) in 1950. The personnel from both publicly and privately managed newspapers participated in the conference and discussed the issues of the use of newsprints, newspaper prices, publication, advertisements, editing, and accounting. Furthermore, in an effort to establish a reporting system, the News Bureau requested the privately owned newspapers, such as Wenhui bao, to send reports regarding happenings and problems in the paper. The News Bureau would also send directives to Jiefang ribao on the general direction of the editorials and the management. Jiefang ribao would set the yearly plan based on the directives.

Despite the CCP’s efforts to coordinate and readjust the Shanghai newspaper industry, privately owned newspapers, such as Wenhui bao and Xinmin bao, did not necessarily follow the party directions, or cooperate with the party. As late as May 1952, Chen Yusun expressed his frustration with the readjustment of the Shanghai newspapers. Chen stated that “division of labor among the Shanghai’s privately managed newspapers—Dagong, Xinwen, Wenhui, and Xinmin, was suggested two years’ earlier, but it has not been resolved yet.” One of the reasons, Chen argued, was that “among the people who are in charge of the newspapers, there are people who have the old thoughts on publishing newspapers,
and they think that Shanghai newspapers have always been national broadsheet newspapers, and cannot accept the policy of specialization.” Furthermore, Chen claimed that some people “have serious ideas of liberalism, which obstructed the division of labor under the unified leadership.”89 We can again see the limits of the CCP’s capacity in its frustration in trying to reorganize the Shanghai newspaper industry from the spring of 1950.

It was exactly those limits that drove the CCP to apply the coercive measures to fill the gaps. The Thought Reform was organized to complete the reorganization of the Shanghai newspaper industry. It was carried out for three months, from 21 August to 21 October 1952.90 Mostly, personnel from editorial and management departments of the privately owned newspapers were major participants of the campaign. The mass campaigns, such as the Thought Reform, turned out to be an effective way to coerce the shareholders of the privately owned newspapers to give up their shares to the government, and coerce the privately owned newspapers to be transformed into joint management. Furthermore, as Zhang Jishun described, Yan Baoli was pressured to give up some of his private shares in the process of the Thought Reform.91 Political grounds of those capitalists and the managers of the privately owned newspapers became weakened during the mass campaigns, such as the Three Antis and Five Antis Campaigns (三反五反運動 sanfan wufan yundong) and the Thought Reform. Thus, they could not withstand the political pressure from the party to maintain their private shares and the status of the privately owned papers. Zhang Jishun claimed that the transformation into joint ownership was the result of coercion. The Shanghai Propaganda Department reported one of the important results of the Thought Reform as follows.

Except for Dagongbao’s transfer to the north and the merge of Yibao, both Xinminbao and Wenhuibao are reorganized into the joint public and private management. These papers are allocated with a certain amount of capital so that they will be self-sufficient and no longer become economically burdensome (for the state).92

Consequently, after the Thought Reform, those remaining privately owned newspapers, such as Wenhuibao and Xinminbao, were transformed into joint public and private management by the end of 1952. By October 1952, during the Thought Reform period, Yan Baoli expressed his intention to donate his 34,024 shares of Wenhuibao to the state,
although it is not certain how much he ultimately donated.\textsuperscript{93} Yan was obviously under political pressure during the Thought Reform. By November 1952, some private shares, 6.4 percent of the total, were confiscated by the state. And at the same time, the loan taken out from \textit{Jiefang ribao}, which amounted to 2 billion yuan (46.40 percent of the total share), was converted into public shares as an investment, and furthermore, \textit{Jiefang ribao} invested 1.2 billion yuan (27.84 percent of the total share), all of which was turned into public shares.\textsuperscript{94} As a result, \textit{Wenhui bao}’s 80.68 percent of the total shares was transformed into public shares by 1953. \textit{Xinmin bao} was also transformed into joint public and private management. As discussed earlier, the Shanghai newspapers’ financial reliance on the state made the privately owned newspapers vulnerable to state interference, but at the same time the coercive measures played an important role in pushing the publishers of the privately owned newspapers to give up their private shares and to transform their papers into joint public and private management. As a result, the privately owned newspapers came to a complete demise by the end of 1952 in Shanghai.

Table 6: Management of the Major Shanghai Newspapers in the Early PRC, 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jiefang ribao</td>
<td>Public management (party organ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinwen ribao</td>
<td>Joint public and private management (\textit{gongsi heying})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenhui bao</td>
<td>Joint public and private management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinmin wanbao</td>
<td>Joint public and private management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laodong bao</td>
<td>Public management (party organ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qingnian bao</td>
<td>Public management (party organ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion

This study of the structural transformation of the Shanghai newspaper industry from the 1930s to the 1950s sheds new light on the nature of the nationalization in the PRC and more broadly the socialist revolution in the 1950s. I argue that the nationalization of the newspapers in the 1950s was facilitated by the transformation of the media structure in the pre-1949 period. The changes that took place during the Sino-Japanese War were particularly important. During wartime, the balance of power
between the state and the Shanghai capitalists over media control shifted to the state, as a result of the Japanese occupation of Shanghai. Indeed, the three important changes during the wartime—(1) the weakening of the Shanghai capitalists’ control over the newspapers, (2) the state’s increasing control over raw materials and resources, and (3) the rise of state’s planning and coordination—had a lasting impact on the postwar restructuring of the Shanghai newspaper industry. Once the path was set, the structure of the Shanghai newspaper industry owned by the political authority rather than capitalists had a self-reinforcing process that had a lasting impact in the postwar period. Thus, regardless of whether the CCP intended to nationalize the Shanghai newspaper industry from the beginning of its regime, the Shanghai newspapers could be nationalized smoothly without strong resistance because the influence of the Shanghai capitalists over the Shanghai newspapers had already been weakened during wartime. Nevertheless, I do not claim that the nationalization process completely relied on contingent historical events, such as war. Rather, I argue that while rigorous state building was already in process from the prewar period, the Japanese occupation of Shanghai after 1941 had the effect of facilitating the shift in the balance of power between state and society.

Notes


