

representation. As the analysis stops in 2012, the author could not include the back-peddalling that has taken place under Xi Jinping, which calls into question the CCP's degree of institutionalization.

Zeng's book reads like an ambitious synthesis of works and debates on the evolution of the CCP, which make it suitable for teaching purposes. It has the merit of taking the CCP's official discourse seriously and it raises key questions regarding its ideological evolution. Further work could investigate the future evolution of "formal" and "informal" ideology: is the former to be progressively marginalized by the latter or will the two progressively merge?

JÉRÔME DOYON

doyonjerome@hotmail.fr

Media Politics in China: Improvising Power under Authoritarianism

MARIA REPNIKOVA

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Media Politics in China is a refreshing and engaging comparative study of the relationship between critical journalists and authoritarian states. Drawing on interviews with journalists, scholars and experts in China and Russia, rare access to high-level Chinese government officials, and a textual analysis of official discourse and media reports, the author presents a masterful analysis of the intricate dynamics of media politics, unpacking the improvisation and ambiguity embedded in the official approaches to media supervision and the critical journalists' creative efforts to push the boundaries. Characterized by "guarded improvisation," this flexible arrangement and its utility in sustaining the authoritarian rule are illustrated further by comparative cases of the former Soviet Union under Gorbachev and the Russian Federation under Putin.

The shared goal of improving governance and the state-dominant fluidity are key to the effectiveness and sustainability of this collaborative relationship between critical journalists and the Chinese central state. This flexible arrangement leaves enough room for the central state to calibrate reaction and response; it also allows critical journalists to creatively dodge political restrictions. The usual tension between contestation and control certainly exists, as the author prudently documents in the book. In spite of this, the central state sees benefits from media supervision, a form of consultative authoritarianism, in discovering problems and improving governance. As such, the framework of fluid collaboration and guarded improvisation highlights the broader context in which the cat-and-mouse game of authoritarian media control plays out.

The unique theoretical contribution and solid empirical analysis in this book advance the study of media politics and comparative authoritarianism. First, it opens up new research opportunities in media politics by revealing the previously overlooked aspects of state–media relations. The diagnosis that "the dominant frameworks for engaging with Chinese media have not significantly changed over time" (p. 9) is cogent. It expands the existing framework of media control versus resistance by including fluid collaboration in the dynamics, a model based on meticulous analysis that traces the process of state–media interaction on sensitive reports. The rejection of the binary view of control versus resistance can be applied to other areas of

media politics research such as television and social media, as well as to other areas of state–society relations such as domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations, semi-official organizations, and labour unions.

Second, the seemingly counterintuitive conclusion of the collaborative relationship between the state and its faithful critics accentuates an underexplored area in our understanding of authoritarianism. Repression, naturally implied in the notion of authoritarianism, does not necessarily characterize all interactions between the state and the individuals and entities it intends to rule. This is the case especially under two conditions: the state may be sophisticated enough to know the importance of soliciting bottom-up feedback; and the ruled see the possibility, sometimes after failed challenges, of changing the outcome from within the system. The author's probing of the nationalist and patriotic orientations of Chinese intellectuals and activists highlights this crucial dimension of Chinese authoritarianism. This book therefore makes a unique contribution to our understanding of the nature of authoritarianism.

The framework of fluid collaboration derived from the Hu–Wen decade remains valid and important under the current leadership of Xi Jinping. However, the author recognizes the potential vulnerability of such a relationship in the long term. As Xi continues to recentralize power, cracks of dissatisfaction start to appear among certain segments of critical journalist and activist circles in China, which may further instigate insecurity of the central state. The flexibility in this consultative governance model can be a double-edged sword – it can sustain the relationship for constructive criticism and counsel; it can also derail such bottom-up participation. Despite these diverging possibilities, the author is right to point out that the relationship between critical journalists and the central state will remain a sensitive thermometer to gauge the tendency towards political change and the durability of the regime. This book is profitable reading material for upper-level undergraduate courses and graduate seminars on media politics, comparative authoritarianism and Chinese politics. Its firm command of complex materials from multiple sources and its unique theoretical contribution make an exemplary piece of scholarship and mark another turning point in the field of Chinese media politics.

DAN CHEN

chend@etown.edu

China's Unruly Journalists: How Committed Professionals are Changing the People's Republic

JONATHAN HASSID

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Jonathan Hassid's new book, *China's Unruly Journalists*, examines contemporary Chinese journalists and the courageous pushing-back practice of advocate journalism. He explores how some Chinese advocate journalists disobeyed the Chinese government and authorities and challenged their media control during a period when critical reporting and investigative journalism prevailed in China. Hassid is optimistic about the influence this type of journalism has in bringing about democratically friendly changes to China. He predicts that ultimately these advocate journalists can change China by publishing reports that contest certain policies. His book is drawn from