The New China News Agency and foreign policy in China

It is generally presumed, and occasionally argued, that the Chinese press is not in the least analogous with the news media in other countries. As with other things Chinese, this uniqueness is typically seen to be a function of communism; or sometimes just 'Chineseness.' It follows that comparisons can, at best, only be sought with other communist states, and even here the 'problem' of 'Chineseness' may be a spoiler. This paper is written from an alternative set of assumptions — mainly that the Chinese press is not necessarily or entirely beyond understanding in terms of a broad set of functional concepts applicable in a host of otherwise distinctive cultures.

*A priori* assumptions about China are not the only hindrance to fashioning an understanding of the behaviour and influence of the Chinese press. We also bear the burden of at least two quasi-myths about the role of press in politics and society. In both cases the mythology is rooted in broad normative aspirations which, however admirable they may be in ideal terms, only barely approximate the real world. It goes without saying that ideals do not make the best conceptual devices for empirical analysis. The first myth emanates from our own tradition and takes this form: 'In a free society, the press is the voice and conscience of the

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1 See, for example, Alan Liu, 'Ideology and Information: Correspondents of the New China News Agency and Chinese Foreign Policy Making,' *Journal of International Affairs, xxvi* (1972); James Chu, 'The P.R.C. Journalist as Cadre,' *Current Scene* (November 1975); Ignatius Peng Yao, 'The New China News Agency: How it Serves the PARTY,' *Journalism Quarterly* (winter 1969).
people.' The second fable is current in China and among those who study China. It takes the form: 'In a revolutionary society the press is an instrument of class struggle operating in accordance with The Party Line.'

If East and West, Canada and China, democratic and communist political behaviour were deductible from such propositions then there would, indeed, be little potential for comparative analysis. But it is my contention that the primary function of any news apparatus is information gathering. (I will leave it to others to comment on the perfectibility of the press as a 'social conscience.') What is more, the dynamics of information gathering in any state have a fairly common organizational logic which defies the second of the current myths. Last but not least, a consequence of elaborate media is a complex political system with heterogeneous policy manifestations. In short, information inevitably carries value; the more information, the more values; the more value conflict, the more politics; the more politics, the less continuity and homogeneity likely in policy behaviour. It is my belief that the role of the press in Chinese foreign policy and foreign affairs is most usefully understood against a backdrop of this set of assumptions.

In this article I shall focus on the New China News Agency (NCNA). This organization is central to the operation of all the media in China. What is more, the Agency has a near monopoly on the gathering of overseas news, so vital to the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. In addition to being the 'ears' of the policy-makers, the NCNA functions internationally in propaganda, diplomatic, and, occasionally, subversive capacities. The Agency's true uniqueness is perhaps mostly a matter of the eclectic combination of its roles. Toward the end of the discourse I shall try to assess the importance of the Agency in the political cum bureaucratic process in China.

HISTORY
The Chinese communists sensed the need for a news-gathering apparatus at an early date in their movement. The Hung Se Chung Hua She (Red China News Agency) was established in
January 1932 in the soviet that Mao and Chu Teh had founded in Kiangsi. Five years later, in fulfilment of the united front agreement with the Nationalist government, the name of the Agency was changed from hung (red) to hsin (new). Organizationally, however, it remained a subservient unit of Hung Se Chung Hua Pao She (Red China Newspaper Agency). Operating with primitive equipment, the Agency monitored the Kuomintang Central News Agency broadcasts and intercepted, when possible, the broadcasts of the Tass, Domei, and Havas news agencies. NCNA intake was distributed within the party and government apparatus, forwarded to the internal press, or transmitted for domestic broadcast.2

As the civil war progressed, so did the role and status of the NCNA. The Agency began to assume editorial functions for its constituent partners, Hsin Hua Jih Pao (New China Daily) and Chieh Fang Jih Pao (Liberation Daily). In 1939 the Agency's status increased as it was separated from the New China Daily and given an independent organizational life. The NCNA posted correspondents in the front areas and established sub-bureaux and branches in several of the base areas. Contact with foreign news sources was improved by the acquisition of a five-tube receiving apparatus (previously they had operated with a three-tube set). By 1948 the NCNA was monitoring thirty foreign radio and wire services. In 1942 the Agency assumed a new external role by establishing a three-to-four hours per day English-language broadcast to foreign countries. Even before the culmination of the civil war, the NCNA was being regarded as an important part of the future foreign policy and foreign affairs apparatus of the Chinese communists.

HEADQUARTERS: MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS
The NCNA's central office co-ordinates the farflung domestic and foreign roles played by the Agency. In 1957 it was estimated that

the Peking office had a staff of about 2000. Judging by the substantial growth of external and domestic services since that time, one might assume that there has been a concurrent growth of front office personnel. That hypothesis is also reinforced by the 250 per cent increase in appointments at the deputy director level since 1957.

The central office is divided into a number of functional departments. These include the international department, municipal office, radio communications department, news photography section, publications section, data and reference department, and a proofing office. In addition, there are offices with titles suggesting politically inspired functions: for example, the culture and education department, the agricultural section, and the industrial section. Since the days of its institutional separation from the newspaper, it has maintained its own editorial department. The NCNA also maintains collateral institutions, including its own foreign-language school.

Our primary concern here is with NCNA's foreign affairs functions. However, the Agency operates at both the international and domestic levels, and the extent of its domestic operations may usefully indicate the enormity of the managerial task facing the head office. By the late 1950s, the NCNA maintained over thirty internal bureaux spread throughout the country. These were reportedly further divided into some 2000 local units employing 70,000 cadres. By 1957, this network was transmitting 50,000 words a day into the Peking office.

In addition to being the intake point of reports from domestic and foreign correspondents, the Peking office is the centre of the Agency's monitoring operations. According to Wang Chia-hua, a member of NCNA's international department, by 1957 the Peking office was receiving 281 hours of foreign news per day through radioteletype, Hellschreiber, and Morse Code transmission. Three

3 'China's News Agency,' China Topics (October 1975).
5 Liu, 'Ideology and Information.'
6 Wang Chia-yu, 'Peiping's NCNA,' p 11.
7 Wang Chia-hua, 'NCNA,' p 5.
hundred thousand words per day of English transmission were being monitored. The NCNA also receives, by subscription, the major world press and periodical output.

The NCNA has long been plugged into all major wire services. Only Associated Press appeared to be withholding its services until an agreement was signed between the two agencies in 1972. However, Henry Schwartz was able to ascertain that the NCNA had, in fact, been receiving 50,000 words per day from AP since the late 1940s, through the Hong Kong-based communist press. Over the past decade the Agency has sought to fill out its wire service intake from the lesser press agencies. In 1964 Chu Mu-chih, then a deputy director of the Agency, signed agreements with Algérie Presse Service, and similar institutions in Ghana, Burma, and Pakistan. This expansion has continued to the present, as is reflected in agreements with the Athens News Agency (1973) and Tunis Afrique Press (1975). These linkages, of course, represent an output as well as intake dimension of international affairs. For the present, however, our focus will be on the NCNA's roles as a foreign information gatherer.

EXTERNAL BUREAUX: REPORTING FUNCTIONS

The NCNA's overseas bureaux vary in size from one- or two-man operations (eg, Panama) to posts with up to 130 resident personnel (eg, Hong Kong). The chief of staff is normally the 'correspondent,' a title which appears to be as much office designation as functional definition. Tung Chi-p'ing, one of the very few expatriated Chinese foreign service cadre, presumed that all 'correspondents' were of high party rank. It is apparent that, at least until recently, veteran reporters from the Yanan and Korean War periods have tended to hold down the 'correspondent' posts. Their

8 Ibid.
9 Henry Schwartz, 'The Ts'an-k'ao Hsiao-hsi: How Well Informed are Chinese Officials about the Outside World,' *China Quarterly* (July-September 1966), p 255.
10 NCNA (Algiers), 15 July 1964; NCNA (Karachi), 23 July 1964; NCNA (Accra), 30 July 1964.
chief competition has come from individuals whom Alan Liu has identified as 'urbane intellectuals,' journalists and politicians who came into the party through united front work during the Korean War. Their proficiency in foreign languages, as compared with that of the 'Yenanites,' gave them an edge, at least until the latter were tooled up for overseas assignments by the early 1960s. But language proficiency has not been by any means an absolute requirement. It would appear that nearly all of the overseas bureaux have translators in residence. The bulk of these cadres are young journalists and linguists trained after 1950. The larger bureaux also maintain personnel with skills ranging from teletype operation to printing.

There appears to be a fair amount of circulation of personnel serving overseas, though it is not unusual for a correspondent to put in a two- or three-year stint abroad. It has also been noted that the overseas bureaux are paid periodic visits by headquarters officials. John Cooley, a veteran reporter in Africa, came to regard Chu Mu-chih as a kind of 'inspector general' from NCNA headquarters.10 Chu has, in fact, travelled widely in his capacity as 1st deputy director (and now director), but on the whole it is clear that his excursions were more diplomatic than inspectorial. If there is a routine inspection of NCNA overseas bureaux, it is more likely that a lesser functionary carries it out.

The primary function of the external bureaux is, of course, to relay information to the central office in Peking. Much has been made of the clandestine activities of NCNA correspondents and operatives. We shall discuss this in some detail below; suffice it to say here that the overwhelming bulk of NCNA reporting is of a 'soft' nature. With twenty-three foreign bureaux in operation in 1957, NCNA correspondents were transmitting 10,000 words a day to Peking.14 There are at present approximately three times as many overseas posts, and presumably the volume of reporting has increased proportionately.

The Agency's operatives gather their information in much the

14 Wang Chia-hua, 'NCNA,' p 5.
same way as does any other foreign correspondent. Local literature and government releases are watched. Government officials are interviewed, and Chinese correspondents maintain contacts with a variety of persons in the country of their residence. In addition to wire-transmitted reports, the overseas bureaux also collect magazines and other publications which are shipped in bulk to China for analysis and reference. Overseas bureaux carry out three other functions (see below). These are the publication and distribution of material, diplomatic contacts, and 'united front' work.

The over-all pattern in the development of NCNA's overseas bureaux reflects the nation's priorities and the Agency's strategies of information gathering. The first bureau established was in Prague (1948). With the foreign policy decision to 'lean to one side,' China's most immediate informational concerns were directed to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, countries which, it must be remembered, were even less known to Chinese policymakers than they were to Westerners. In Asia, NCNA operatives established themselves in North Korea and Mongolia.

Not until Chinese alienation from the USSR began to settle in during the Korean War were NCNA correspondents sent further afield into the Western and Third Worlds. Bureaux were established in Rangoon, New Delhi, Djakarta, London, and Geneva in the years before 1955. On the whole, this was a period in which the Chinese were reconsidering not only their foreign policy, but also their instrumental approach to international relations. The situation portended well for the growth of the NCNA. In the years between 1953 and 1958 the NCNA expanded its overseas bureaux from six posts to twenty-nine. The influence which these expanded informational facilities had on policy decisions taken in the late 1950s and early 1960s can only be surmised. The more unfortunately biased Western interpretations notwithstanding, China's overtures to the emerging Afro-Asian world in the early 1960s were amazingly well conceived, and received. The NCNA is, undoubtedly, owed considerable credit.

15 See, for example, Cecil Johnson, Communist China and Latin America (New York 1970), pp 10-12.
Not surprisingly, the NCNA has generally pursued a ‘foothold’ or ‘regional centre’ strategy for expansion. Offices in Geneva and Berne gave the Agency’s correspondents access to Western Europe as well as other contacts through the Geneva conferences. The Stockholm bureau, established in the early 1960s, served as a base of operations for the Scandinavian region. From 1958 to 1963, the NCNA ran a regional operation from Rabat, Morocco. The Cairo bureau served, for a time, as an entry point to the greater Middle East. Even some of the more recent expansions, such as that to Lusaka (1970), have been designed to open a regional front—in this case with regard to the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Likewise, Chinese correspondents based in Australia have been sighted beating the journalistic bush of New Guinea and Fiji.\(^{16}\)

What is more interesting, however, is that the NCNA has not pursued a low budget, ‘limited fronts’ strategy of information gathering. In its own words, it has set itself ‘on the road toward an agency of world magnitude,’ eschewing a course of ‘writing from imagination for self-intoxication.’\(^{17}\) Once regional posts were established, subsequent expansions into the adjoining countries have been made whenever possible. The Middle East is typical. The Cairo bureau was opened in 1956, and was followed by offices in Syria (1957), Iraq (1958), Yemen (1959), Kuwait (1966), and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (1968). A Lebanon bureau was also opened, and the Damascus office has become the Agency’s observation station for the activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

For political reasons, of course, it has not always been possible for the NCNA to expand its overseas bureaux. Latin America provides interesting evidence of the intensity of the NCNA’s ambition to be ‘worldwide.’ A delegation of Chinese journalists led by Yao Chen toured the region in 1959. In 1960 the Agency set up shop in Cuba before diplomatic relations were established. In July and August of the same year Chu Mu-chih led a delegation of journalists through Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, and Bolivia. As a result of

\(^{16}\) See *China Topics* (October 1975), pp 2 and 4.
\(^{17}\) Wang Chia-hua, ‘NCNA,’ p 7.
this 'push,' the Agency was able to open Chinese-staffed bureaux in Chile and Brazil in late 1960 or early 1961. Formal NCNA bureaux operated by indigenous nationals and 'stringer' correspondents were established in Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. In 1961, a Chinese-staffed bureau was opened in Uruguay, and the following year three correspondents were posted to Mexico. By the mid-1960s, NCNA activity was reported from 'regional centres' as far afield as Guyana and Costa Rica.18

'Stringers' and bureaux run by indigenous nationals are apparently not preferred by the Agency where their use can be avoided. Such operations in Peru, Australia, Italy, and Colombia have been converted to direct management by Chinese. Two problems, in particular, seem to emerge from these surrogate approaches to information gathering. First, NCNA operatives have tended to be identified with indigenous left-wing political movements and have, thus, been subject to considerable government harassment. For example, the Ecuador bureau was closed in 1963 with the arrest of Alexandro Roma, the Agency's local manager. Similar breakdowns have occurred in Argentina and Venezuela.19

The second disadvantage of surrogate correspondents is a related one. Foreign nationals, as correspondents, are not only vulnerable to the repressive measures of the local government, but often have independent objectives themselves. Popular impressions to the contrary, Chinese policy toward foreign revolutions has been considered and cautious.20 And the interests of its left-

18 United States Information Agency, Office of Policy and Research, 'Communist Propaganda Organizations and Activities in Latin America during 1966.'
19 Johnson, China and Latin America, p 12.
minded foreign staff have by no means been identical. Foreign staff affiliate with the Agency primarily to enlarge their local political position. They are in a position to manipulate 'Chinese backing' and embarrass not only NCNA, but the larger diplomatic machinery of China. Even where the NCNA's role is primarily oriented to building 'united fronts,' rather than journalistic reporting, relationships between the Agency and friendly indigenous journalists are likely to be transitional. With very few exceptions, the PRC prefers friendly relations with the indigenous government over 'united fronts' with the left-wing fringe.

The over-all breadth of NCNA overseas operations is not easy to measure. New bureaux are continually being established; others have been closed for a variety of political reasons. The less obvious surrogate reporting arrangements are even more difficult to track. A fair estimate of a number of Chinese-staffed overseas bureaux would be between 60 and 70, with perhaps a dozen or more additional 'stringer' arrangements. At the time of this writing, these are fairly evenly distributed globally. As a reporting network, the NCNA is probably comparable with all but a couple of the giant news agencies.

DIPLOMATIC FUNCTIONS
Wang Chia-hua probably reflected the Agency's conception of itself when he cited 'reporting and distributing news' as its 'regular job.' At the same time, however, the NCNA has played other instrumental roles in China's foreign affairs. These may be divided, for analytical purposes, between 'formal diplomacy' and 'united front' work and are not as functionally removed from the Agency's 'regular job' as it may appear at first.

In countries with which the PRC does not have diplomatic relations (and even in some with Chinese embassies), the NCNA is often engaged in the normal business of foreign missions. It

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21 Though the NCNA operates nearly all of China's overseas news-gathering machinery, it is worth mentioning that Radio Peking and Jen Min Jih Pao (People's Daily) have a few foreign correspondents. Indeed for some time JMJP had facilities in Yugoslavia, while the NCNA did not (Wang Chia-hua, 'NCNA,' p 5).
handles visa applications, makes travel arrangements for indigenous nationals wishing to go to China, works out travel itineraries for Chinese delegations touring abroad, delivers messages of salutation as well as protest to local governments, etc.

By no means all the diplomatic work undertaken by the Agency is perfunctory in nature. Because Chinese foreign correspondents have found access to international society easier than have the representatives of, say, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they have more than occasionally assumed negotiating roles. Tseng Tao, NCNA's bureau chief in Havana, negotiated Sino-Cuban recognition. Kao Liang, the extraordinarily capable NCNA correspondent in Southern Africa, acted as a formal go-between for Ambassador Ho Ying (Tanzania) in expanding relations into Burundi and other Southern African states.22 Two NCNA agents, Tsien Se-hsieh and Cheng Liang-ping, were credited with doing the sticky advance negotiations with Premier Lissouba of the Congo affecting an exchange of missions.23

NCNA personnel from the Peking office are also engaged in formal diplomatic activities. As one would expect, travelling representatives of the Agency are negotiants and signatories of communication agreements with foreign governments and corporations. On the home front, the NCNA is extremely active as a greeter and entertainer of foreign visitors, ranging from President Nixon to lowly bureaucratic functionaries and obscure foreign revolutionaries.

'UNITED FRONT' FUNCTIONS
The NCNA's primary role in Chinese foreign affairs, that of news agency, has been almost universally ignored or underplayed. What has been unduly emphasized, to the extent that the Agency's work is considered at all, has been its role in China's united front strategies. Internationally, China has been, in varying degrees, an ostracized nation for the past quarter-century. It is far beyond the scope of this article to take up the debate as to how 'self-imposed'

22 Larkin, China and Africa, p 65.
23 Cooley, East Wind over Africa, pp 114-1.5.
or 'self-inflicted' this isolation has been. Suffice it to say that, since the closing days of the Korean War, Chinese foreign policy has been geared to a strategic pursuit of friends internationally. Formal alliances and mutual recognition with states has been complemented (and sometimes complicated) by united front building at the subnational level. Just as the NCNA's access advantage has drawn it into formal diplomatic roles with foreign governments, the relatively greater freedom of travel accorded its employees has made it an opportune instrument for the pursuit of united fronts at the subgovernmental level.

The role has not been an unmitigated blessing in terms of the Agency's organizational health. United front contacts, of course, serve not only the larger policy aims of China, but the Agency's information-gathering functions, their 'regular job.' Valuable contacts have been forged along a variety of political, occupational, social, and ethnic dimensions. It is simply not the case that the PRC's united front strategy has been limited to left-wing or revolutionary elements. On the contrary, the PRC's choice of instruments for pursuing this strategy, such as the NCNA, has been eclectic, to say the least, and more than occasionally downright indiscriminate (ideologically) in making 'contacts' at the subgovernmental level. As Van Ness found in his study of the pattern of PRC endorsement of foreign revolutions, the deciding factor in united front building has been the attitude of the outside party.\textsuperscript{24} The preponderance of cordial attitudes toward China is, of course, found among those on the left. If anything, the PRC, through instruments like the NCNA and the All-China Journalists Association, has tried to ameliorate the political narrowness of its 'united fronts' by forging occupational contacts. Even where occupation, rather than outright political affiliation, is the bond, it is, of course, natural that politically left-minded doctors, lawyers, journalists, etc, provide more ready contacts. In short, the NCNA is usually left with stronger ties among the more or less alienated elements of foreign societies than with the ruling élites. But this

\textsuperscript{24} Van Ness, Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy, chap 6.
is not, *per se*, subversive activity, as is so often charged.

What we know about NCNA united front activities comes largely from the problem cases. The pattern of the Agency's contacts has led it more than occasionally into embarrassing situations, arrests, and even expulsion. A study, however, has been made of more than two dozen external conflict situations where the NCNA has been a featured element. Four situational types can be identified. The first and most predominant one sees the indigenous government clamping down on its domestic opponents. The legitimacy and credibility of such undertakings are reinforced by a charge that the indigenous opposition is in the pay of a foreign power; the operative agent of said power could as well be the United States Information Agency as the NCNA, subject to the orientation of the régime. The evidence against the NCNA, at any rate, has ranged from pure fabrication to circumstantial, at best. The scenario has been evident in Mexico and Egypt.

The second case arises either from a change in régime or from a radical alteration of its policy. In any case, foreign friends of the previously constituted government are sent packing. Depending on the stability of the new establishment, this scenario may or may not develop the scapegoating dynamics of the first example. NCNA expulsions from Burundi and Ghana fall into this pattern.

The third situation lies in the area of genuine diplomatic indiscretion. In this case, Chinese policy-makers come to the conclusion that a change in a foreign government is: (a) probable and desirable; or (b) imminent and unavoidable. The Chinese, through the NCNA, may or may not give the opposing forces a 'boost' such as their resources allow, but at any rate they become at least verbally 'identified' with the indigenous aspirant. Sometimes their horse loses, as in the case of Odinga (Kenya) or Soekarno (Indonesia). Thus, what was designed to be politically astute becomes diplomatically indiscreet. As a symbol of the indigenous régime's displeasure, the NCNA correspondent is expelled though as often as not the bureau will remain open and the Chinese ambassador will remain in place. It is to be emphasized that genuine cases of this nature are few in number, though many situations of the
first type described are cast in this mould by the forces in power.

In one way or another any foreign correspondent or employee of a government news agency will recognize these three scenarios as familiar hazards of the profession. The fourth type of situation in which the NCNA appears as a conflict instrument of Chinese foreign policy is considerably more complex – perhaps even unique to the Chinese system. It would appear that in times of extreme ideological stress in China, Chinese cadres serving abroad may seek to reinforce their personal and organizational ideological credibility through one form of diplomatic indiscretion or another. NCNA correspondents are no exception. In Nepal, Burma, and Senegal NCNA agents have come under fire for acts which are, except in these terms, senselessly indiscreet.

NEWS DISTRIBUTION FUNCTIONS

Wang Chia-hua reminds us that, despite its extracurricular functions, the NCNA is a news agency servicing constituencies that are both élite and public, domestic and foreign:

The Agency's news has to be of a general nature, acceptable to all newspapers and catering to the interest of different types of readers. Its news has to be multifarious enough to reflect the complex life of the society. It has to be simple and short to ensure a wide coverage, to enable the papers to carry a good variety of news and to make it possible for its readers to gain a comprehensive picture of the international situation at a quick glance. It has to be fast, accurate and true.25

The bulk of NCNA 'output' goes to the domestic market, ranging from the prestigious People's Daily to the smallest commune news sheet. It supplies the domestic broadcasting apparatus with both raw news and prepackaged editorialized propaganda on both domestic and international issues. And, of course, the Agency channels relevant news to appropriate 'responsible persons of the Party, Army and Administration.'

Our concern here is, however, with the Agency's distribution of

news relevant to foreign policy decision-making and the external implementation of policies. It is safe to say that the NCNA, as an information supplier, is hooked into the foreign policy formulation process via at least three routes. At the most indirect level, the NCNA produces a newspaper called Ts'an-K'ao Hsiao-hsi (Reference Information). Published six days per week, TKHH is distributed to party and government cadres, on a ‘restricted,’ but hardly exclusive, basis. It is safe to assume that any élite involved in the foreign policy machinery has access to TKHH.

In terms of content, TKHH is entirely oriented to reporting external news and external reactions to Chinese policy. There are no editorials and the overwhelming majority of its reports are printed straight from foreign wire, press, or radio sources (and credited accordingly). Regular issues analysed by Henry Schwartz as far back as 1959-60 were made up of material drawn from Reuter, AP, Agence France-Presse, Central News Agency (Taiwan), the United States Armed Forces Radio, Radio Australia, Radio Republik Indonesia, the Christian Science Monitor, and the New York Times, to name but a few sources. Stories directly originating from the NCNA were few in number and always from one of the Agency’s overseas bureaux. Only 17 per cent of the stories carried in the issues examined by Schwartz came from communist sources.26

At one step closer to the decision-making process, the NCNA undoubtedly is the source of international reference data flowing to the several institutes in China that are engaged in the analysis of international relations. These include the International Relations Research Institute of the Academy of Sciences, the International Relations Institute under the Ministry of Higher Education, the Research Department of the Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs, and the Asia-Africa Society.27

26 For a more detailed discussion of TKHH, see Schwartz, ‘Ts’an-k’ao Hsiao-hsi.’
Finally, it is at least widely presumed that TKHH is but one of several 'restricted internal publications' produced for the Chinese decision-making élites. Schwartz, for example, assumes that those at the 'pinnacle of power in Communist China ... have complete access to the vast amount of information constantly flowing into Communist China [as well as] their reference news bulletins.'²⁸ In his interpretation of the Agency, Wang Chia-hua is openly boastful of the Agency's role as the 'ear,' as well as the 'mouth,' of the party's central committee. The specific medium of such high-level information distribution has, however, yet to be discovered.

The NCNA also processes news and propaganda for external transmission. Indirectly this is accomplished by virtue of the Agency's input to the Foreign Languages Press, whose publications are subsequently distributed internationally through Guozi Shudian. Of the numerous periodicals so produced, Peking Review, China Pictorial, and China Reconstructs are the most widely distributed. Similar supply arrangements are maintained with Radio Peking and the China News Service, a specialized organ of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission.

More importantly, the NCNA has its own direct means of distributing news and propaganda abroad. It operates its own wire service. By 1957 English-language transmission was running 8000-12,000 words per day over nine routes: radioteletype to London; Hellschreiber to Prague, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Karachi; Morse Code to Southern Europe, Cairo, Pyongyang, Hanoi, and Yalta. Transmission to Tass was in Russian and accounted for another 8000-10,000 words per day.²⁹ In the 1960s, the NCNA broadened its foreign-language transmission capability and entered into free exchange agreements with a number of foreign wire services. The Agency has also been instrumental in setting up several African news agencies and national radio networks.³⁰ The

²⁸ Schwartz, TKHH, p 79.
²⁹ Wang Chia-hua, 'NCNA,' p 5.
³⁰ See, for example, Cooley, East Wind over Africa, p 50 re ZANews in Zanzibar, and p 116.
NCNA has a 'special relationship' with a number of foreign papers, particularly ones in the Third World. Tanzania's *African Standard* and the Congo's *Dipanda* are cases in point. Less amenable foreign newspapers have apparently carried NCNA stories on a fee basis.

Finally, the NCNA produces its own bulletin(s) for external distribution. The Peking office transmits a daily news file via high-speed Morse Code to its external bureaux. These bureaux, depending on locale and resources, fashion mimeographed press releases in the indigenous language from the larger transmission. Overseas offices appear to have considerable editorial latitude in this regard. In some cases the releases are daily (e.g., Lusaka), in others weekly (e.g., Rangoon). These are sold or distributed freely to the various media of the region. The content of the bulletins is not normally 'hard' propaganda; rather, in addition to straight reporting of events in China and the world, feature stories are carried promoting self-reliance development strategies and Chinese friendship.

NCNA: Importance and influence in foreign policy

We have taken a broad functional look at the central news apparatus in China - the NCNA. Clearly, the NCNA plays two roles in China's international affairs. It is a supplier of information for the decision-making process, and it is an international actor pursuant to both the policy aims of the Chinese state and the organizational business of the Agency itself. That the NCNA is involved in foreign policy and international relations ought to be self-evident. However, is the Agency important and influential?

The relative importance of the NCNA may be gauged along three dimensions:

1. The ability of the Agency to grow and compete in relation to other institutions within the Chinese foreign relations bureaucracy.
2. The ability of the Agency to maintain or grow in status.

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through the mobility of its membership and leadership.

3 The capacity of the Agency to defend itself against anti-professional and anti-bureaucratic forces.

The first two indicators have, of course, been applied in assessing the distribution of power and authority within governmental systems in the West as well as East. The third indicator is more uniquely applicable to the China case.

**Competitive organizational growth**

The NCNA is only one organ within a large and complex bureaucratic system dealing with foreign affairs in China. As has been suggested, this Agency has had peculiar advantages over other organs in the Chinese foreign affairs bureaucracy. The NCNA grew rapidly in the 1950s, taking every advantage of its relatively greater access to the international arena. But the subsequent fifteen years has seen a softening of world attitudes toward China, and other agencies, both political-diplomatic and economic, have moved with more facility into international affairs.

By the time of writing the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is able to deploy its own 'ears and mouth' to nearly all corners of the globe – and does at considerable expense. Has this meant either a retrenchment or a ceiling on the global expanse of the NCNA? Not at all. In most instances the Agency has set up its overseas bureaux in advance of the MFA forging ambassadorial relations. However, when this was not possible, or in cases such as Italy and Ethiopia where early attempts to maintain NCNA bureaux foundered, the Agency has established itself in the wake of formal diplomatic relations. In fact, it appears that the constituencies for the NCNA's information-gathering services have increased, despite the parallel development of overseas facilities under other organizational auspices.

On the home front the Agency's continued expansion, even into the 1970s, is reflected in the proliferation of administrative offices. In the 1950s the Agency was run by a director and two deputies; three more deputies were added in the fall of 1959; and
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three more in the early 1970s. This growth is comparable with that in the administrative hierarchy of the MFA and other foreign affairs agencies. The 'bureaucratic pie' does not appear to be a closed one in this regard.

In the functional area of diplomacy and united front building, the evidence indicates an enlarged, rather than diminished, role for the NCNA. Officials of the Agency are logging at least as many international air miles as they did in the 1960s. In 1971-2, Deputy Director Teng Kang visited Rumania, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Sweden. Of the other deputy directors, Shih Shao-hua has concentrated on Eastern bloc countries since 1970; Miao Hai-ling visited the Congo, Zaire, and Senegal in 1974; Mu Ching visited Turkey and Yugoslavia in 1973; Chang Cheng-te, the 'greenest' of the deputy directors, recently headed a six-man delegation to Ethiopia; and Director Chu Mu-chih spent three weeks in the United States and Canada. Even lesser officials from the Peking headquarters have been globe-trotting since the Cultural Revolution. Li Yen-nien, an untitled cadre in the international news department, led a delegation to ten Latin and Caribbean countries, meeting foreign journalists and heads of state. The expansion of NCNA involvement in ceremonial diplomacy at home is equally evident.

Status and mobility
To assess this dimension of the NCNA I have collected 'appearance data' on thirty NCNA officials over the past twenty-five years. These individuals include the directors, deputy directors, department heads, and their deputies. In the Chinese parlance they constitute the 'responsible persons' of the Agency – its administrative core. Since 1950 these individuals have been cited in the Chinese press over 1800 times in various capacities. No attempt has been made to follow the careers of NCNA foreign correspondents, except in a

52 Jen Min Jih Pao, 25 January, 4 February, and 5 June 1973. Li's tour lasted some four and one-half months.
very few cases where foreign correspondents have subsequently assumed administrative roles in the Peking headquarters.83

The appearance data indicate a number of things. Only three findings need be introduced here. First, it is clear that the administrative functionaries of the Agency appear, in a named fashion, much more often now than they did in the period before the Cultural Revolution. The visibility of deputy directors, for example, has nearly doubled from pre-Cultural Revolution highs and is virtually incomparable with figures from the 1950s: deputy director appearances — 1971 & 1972, 235; 1962 & 1963, 143; 1955 & 1956, 5.

Much of the publicly visible role of Ncna headquarters administrators is in the nature of ceremonial diplomacy — the home front aspect of the larger ‘united front’ function of the Agency. All thirty administrators, and particularly the deputy directors, were fairly active greeters and entertainers. In most bureaucracies status is reflected by the circle of dignitaries in which one travels. Accordingly, I have divided the data along the following lines: High ceremony ($C_1$): presence of a foreign head of state or the foreign minister of an external state; Low ceremony ($C_2$): presence of a minister other than the foreign minister of an external state, ambassador, any other functionary or representative.

The data (table 1) indisputably support the hypothesis that Ncna deputy directors and directors are playing an increasingly important role in ‘high’ ceremonial diplomacy. Before the Cultural Revolution a deputy director of Ncna was only once named in the company of ‘high’ foreign dignitaries.84 Since 1970 the director and his seven deputies have spent over 40 per cent of their

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83 This is not to suggest that there is no career mobility for correspondents. Their overseas experience, however, seems to lead them into and up through laterally related organs of the Chinese foreign relations bureaucracy. Kao Liang, for example, moved from his correspondent posts in India and Africa into the United Nations as first secretary of the Chinese delegation. Tseng Tao, former bureau chief in Havana, became secretary to the State Council Office on Foreign Affairs and subsequently ambassador to Algeria.

84 Ncna, 28 May 1955. Chu Mu-chih was present at a banquet given by Premier Chou En-lai for the Prime Minister of Indonesia.
appearsances at ceremonial functions in the presence of 'high'
foreign officials.

It is important to note that what is being measured here is
'appearance by name.' It is quite possible that NCNA functionaries,
even during the 1950s, were in attendance more often than was
indicated by Chinese press and broadcast commentary. Certainly
as journalists, albeit of the management echelon, one might as-
sume that such individuals have all along been active 'on-lookers'
in the processes of ceremonial diplomacy in Peking. Arthur Lall,
among other diplomats, has noted the tendency of the Chinese to
put foreign dignitaries on display to an extraordinarily large
number of indigenous functionaries. Thus NCNA on-lookers have,
perhaps, always been present. But in the past five years they are
cited as present. Since the NCNA is, itself, in most cases the medium
of citation, directly or indirectly (eg, through Jen Min Jih Pao),
one can only conclude that the NCNA's status has risen self-
consciously!

There is one other 'status' indicator that bears mention. Prior
to the Cultural Revolution no official of the Agency had held
either full, or alternate, membership in the Central Committee
of the Communist party. This is perhaps surprising in the sense
that both Ch'en K'o-han and Wu Leng-hsi, who preceded Chu
Mu-chih in the directorship, were 'old-timers' and very active in
the communist elite. In 1969, Deputy Director Shih Shao-hua was

named as one of 109 alternates of the 9th Central Committee. His status was maintained in the 1973 reshuffle which created 124 alternates. Yet more impressive was the promotion of Chu Mu-chih, who had been named director of the NCNA in 1972 after over two decades of journalistic service, to full membership in the Central Committee.

Organizational defence

Every organization has its constituencies: external bosses or customers which constitute what theorists sometimes call an organization’s ‘task environment.’ One of the critical dimensions of an organization’s ‘health’ is the working independence it is able to establish within its task environment. Some organizations are purely and simply the administrative handymen of their constituencies, totally lacking in independence and therefore influence. The opposite extreme is the organization that comes to dominate, in fact ‘pre-articulate,’ the interests of its constituents. The NCNA’s importance and influence is reflected in the measure of working independence it has been able to establish, despite its immersion in a task environment where such independence is theoretically eschewed.

It is asserted by Marxist theorists that journalism is merely one instrument of class struggle. The party is the highest instrument and its policy is the strategy of class struggle; therefore the journalist must be objective within the confines of party policy and must submit himself to the direction and control of the party. Part of the NCNA’s latter-day importance within the Chinese state bureaucracy is no doubt derived from its early, apparent acceptance of these maxims. As in so many other areas of government, the Agency was, in the early 1950s, dependent on non-communist or novice communist personnel. A programme of ideological transformation was initiated within the Agency. Study groups were

36 The classic example of this form of organizational dynamism is portrayed by John Kenneth Galbraith in his New Industrial State (Boston 1967).
formed to train correspondents and press workers in the Marxist perspective. The final stage of this programme of transformation was a ‘classification test,’ which was published in 1953. The NCNA’s classification test came to be regarded as a model for other organizations to follow. Though it is not possible to reproduce the whole test here, an exemplary question will be instructive:

Q. What is the basic economic law of modern capitalism?

A. The basic economic law of modern capitalism is: the guaranteeing of the maximum capitalist profits through the exploitation of the majority of the population in the country and the turning of them to bankruptcy and poverty; through the enslavement and ceaseless plunder of the people of other countries, particularly the people of backward countries; and through resort to war and the militarization of the national economy aimed at safeguarding maximum profits.88

By 1956 some party leaders had come to think that the ideological transformation of China’s bourgeois and novice communist cadres could be deemed complete or, at least, greatly advanced. The resulting policy was summed up in the slogan ‘Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools Contend.’ Instead, anti-state, anti-socialist, and, most particularly, anti-party ‘weeds’ blossomed profusely, and nowhere perhaps more abundantly than in journalistic circles. Various journalists and press organizations sought to establish two dimensions of independence vis-à-vis their state constituencies. First, there was the demand for a free press; political freedom, that is, from the editorial censorship of the party. Secondly, there was a demand for greater professionalization; management by professionals (‘colleagues,’ rather than commissars), promotion by seniority, higher technical standards in gathering and transmitting the news.89

88 Hsueh Hsieh, 2 December 1953.
89 See ‘Journalists Expose Rightist Activities to Usurp Leadership of Newspapers,’ NCNA, 24 June 1957; ‘Forum Continues to Criticize the Activities and Speeches by Rightists among Journalistic Workers,’ NCNA, 25 June 1957; and other stories related to the Journalists’ Forum in SCMP, no 1566, 10 July 1957, pp 34-51.
Journalistic circles were extraordinarily hard hit by the anti-rightist campaign which followed the aborted Hundred Flowers experiment. The NCNA, however, went virtually unscathed. In fact, just as professionalism was being thoroughly routed from the domestic press bureaucracy, the NCNA celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a resounding trumpeting of its own professional-ization. The superiority of its editors, newspapermen, and technical cadres was vaunted. The NCNA proclaimed that it 'had started on the road toward an agency of world magnitude.'

An examination of the rectification campaign documents and regular NCNA reporting reveals two important findings about the Agency in the late 1950s. First, NCNA reporting, as reflected in its bulletins and TKHH, was in no sense inspired by rigorous Marxist theoretical categories such as appeared in the classification test. Its view of the world was certainly loyal to Chinese foreign policy objectives, but not ideologically constrained.

Secondly, the Agency did not become a hot-bed of anti-party activity as was the case of many other journalistic organs. The director of the propaganda department of the party, Lu Ting-yi, noted proudly that there was a lack of rightist sentiment within the Agency, and right-wing journalists from other journalistic circles had to send their own 'agents' over to the NCNA to 'stir

41 For example, a study of NCNA reporting on Canada, as revealed in its bulletin, shows the existence of several different, and not necessarily complementary, conceptual schemes at work at the same time. See Dial, 'The Several and Competing Chinese Perceptions of Canada: A Content Analysis of Hsinhua 1950-72,' in Denis Stairs and Don Munton, eds, Canada in World Perspectives (forthcoming). TKHH reports bear a similar conceptual heterogeneity as presented by Schwartz. It is only fair to point out that Schwartz's own interpretation of his data is at variance with this assessment. The root of disagreement appears to be over what he regarded in 1966 as Chinese-distorted perceptions of the United States. He argues: 'Both TKHH and Peoples Daily tacitly acknowledge American tactical strength. But they refuse to let through to their readers anything showing that American military power, so visible abroad, springs from a most formidable fundamental strength at home.' In retrospect it would appear that Schwartz's interpretation was imbued with more patriotism than foresight. At any rate, it is his, rather than the Chinese journalists', empiricism that is questionable.
up' criticism of the party. In short, the Agency had, by 1957, developed a strategy of realizing its professional *cum* organizational ambitions, while maintaining strict rhetorical loyalty to the party. The integrality of the NCNA's organizational defence strategy and the realization of its organizational and professionalization aspirations are perhaps most adequately demonstrated in the words of a spokesman of the Agency:

Thus, the New China News Agency, acting as the mouth and ear of our people, the Party and the Government ... must have its own news sources and contacts and must distribute news to the length and breadth of the world ... the agency's early development into a world news agency is a urgent mission before the Party as well as for the agency itself. For the accomplishment of that mission, the agency, under the leadership of the Party, is looking for and training correspondents to be posted abroad in an endeavor to set up a network of news correspondents to broaden its news sources.

In its efforts to establish a relationship of working independence within its task environment, the NCNA was assisted by several 'liberal' members of the party's Central Committee (Lu Ting-yi and Teng Hsiao-p'ing, in particular). Whether these individuals had, as the Maoists subsequently argued, ulterior, power-seeking motives is beyond our present scope of interest. The fact is, however, that the NCNA unhesitatingly traded a formal kind of loyalty to its primary constituent for organizational growth and a good deal of professional and intellectual independence. Its working independence was not cost-free; there are probably few bargains in bureaucratic politics. However, I think it is fair to say that in all of its functional areas, the Agency performed more effectively because of its *quid pro quo* approach to organizational defence within an often assertive task environment.

The Cultural Revolution, of course, presented new challenges to the NCNA. Professionalism was attacked internally, and the

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42 Lu Ting-yi, 'Talks on Current Journalistic Work.'
43 Wang Chia-hua. 'NCNA.' p 6.
Agency's association with 'liberal'-minded party leaders such as Lu and Teng proved contentious. There were apparently also old personal scores to settle.44 Neither space nor data are available to draw a detailed picture of the Agency's arduous voyage through the tides of the Cultural Revolution. The outcome is, however, quite apparent. The re-emergence of Teng Hsiao-p'ing, Ch'iao Kuan-hua, and Chu Mu-chih at the helms of state, foreign affairs, and news gathering, respectively, suggests that the broad informational (rather than narrow ideological) approach to foreign policy formation is in force throughout the Chinese system.

CONCLUSION
The Chinese press is a part of the state machinery. Bound by totalitarian theory, we have for too long assumed that this meant that the Chinese press was both apolitical and lacking in influence. It is to be hoped that in the coming years we will begin to see that politics, precisely in the sense of the 'authoritative allocation of value,' is very much alive in the state bureaucracy of China. China's press elites are neither puppets nor kingpins. They are representatives of a growing bureaucratic element of the Chinese polity, with organizational interests in a wide range of communication and diplomatic areas. As is the case with bureaucracies around the world, the press elites of China are also engaged in the maintenance and expansion of status and power – they too have a stake in the Chinese game of politics.

44 See, for example, the attack on Correspondent Wang Wei-chen in Hung-ch'i Tung-hsun (Red Flag Bulletin), 25 February 1968, reproduced in SCMP, no 4197, 15 March 1968.