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## Multilingual freedom of the press in Macau Liberdade da imprensa multilingue em Macau

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**Abstract:** There can be no conclusive determining regarding true press freedom in Macau, and perhaps this statement can be applied elsewhere as well. Issues of self-censorship, partisanship, or cultural loyalty exist in cities and countries around the world, and most of the time there is simply no reliable measurement to determine their impact. The Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Macau is separate and distinct from mainland China, but that does not mean that it is entirely without question regarding its freedom of the press, ethical journalistic practices, and interference by non-authorized agencies at the three languages local newspapers.

**Keywords:** ethical practices, interference, partisanship, press freedom, self-censorship

**Resumo:** Não existe uma determinação conclusiva sobre a liberdade de imprensa em Macau, e talvez esta declaração possa ser igualmente aplicada em outros lugares. Questões como a autocensura, o partidarismo ou a lealdade cultural existem em cidades e países ao redor do mundo e, na maioria das vezes, simplesmente não existe uma medida confiável para determinar o seu impacto. Embora a Região Administrativa Especial (RAE) de Macau seja separada e distinta da China continental, isso não significa que não existam dúvidas quanto à liberdade de imprensa, às práticas e éticas jornalísticas e à ingerência por agentes não autorizados nos órgãos de comunicação social em três línguas do território.

**Palavras-Chave:** autocensura, ingerência, liberdade de imprensa, partidarismo, práticas éticas

The city of Macau is both a traditional metropolis and a “Special Administrative Region” (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. It has a population of around 600,000 spread across three small but distinct landmasses, and boasts one of the highest population densities in the world. In 2018 Macau hosted more than 35 million visitors(1), largely in part thanks to it being the only Chinese region with legalized gambling. Macau is more than simply a tourist destination though. Though small, the city also represents a distinct people with a unique cultural history that has led to one of the most unusual media situations in the world.

The region itself is only about thirty square kilometers, but it contains more media density per population than anywhere else(2) on the planet(3). More unusual still, Macau's media landscape is populated by Chinese-language, Portuguese-language, and to a smaller extent English-language presses. These language groups operate separately from any mainland Chinese influence and help contribute to a wholly unique metropolitan culture found nowhere else in the Chinese speaking world.

While it cannot be stressed enough that the SAR of Macau is separate and distinct from mainland China, that does not mean that it is entirely without question regarding its freedom of the press, ethical journalistic

practices, and interference by non-authorized agencies. Having three distinct presses in three language groups necessarily gives rise to problems regarding the equality of its component aspects, the freedoms they enjoy, and the special challenges existing for each individual language groups.

Because the SAR of Macau maintains official languages of both Portuguese and Cantonese, and the media landscape is likewise primarily dominated by those languages, this paper will be focusing primarily upon the differences, challenges, and comparisons of these two presses.

### **A question of press freedom**

The constitution of Macau guarantees a “freedom of the press” within the city. Despite this claim there have been some speculation that a certain degree of outside influence has held sway over media practices, research, and publication within the region. Reports on infringements on the practices of the press have existed both in the People's Republic of China, and the nearby SAR of Hong Kong for many years.

In previous years, while the city was still under direct Portuguese control, the Portuguese press was widely considered to have been directly influenced and controlled by governmental forces. This resulted in a lack of trust felt by the public in relation to news reported (Wong, 2018, p.17-19). Under this control, a certain higher regard was kept for the Chinese Language press and as a result there came to be a disparity between the public perception of journalistic ethics and trust as differentiated by language groups.

Today, with the city officially a SAR of the mainland Chinese government, there exists the same issue: do outside sources exert an unfair or biasing influence upon the supposedly free press of Macau? More specifically, how does the freedom of press compare between Chinese Language and Portuguese Language media in Macau?

### **Methodology and Ethical Ramifications**

The primary methodology used within this paper will be a comparison of the known facts and background information of both Chinese and Portuguese presses, and an analysis of information obtained through public

<sup>1</sup> Macau receives more than 35 million visitors in 2018. <https://macauihub.com.mo/2019/01/15/pt-macau-recebeu-mais-de-35-milhoes-de-visitantes-em-2018/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media\\_of\\_Macau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_of_Macau)

<sup>3</sup> Despite the small size of the territory, there are media outlets — newspapers, radio and television stations - which broadcast in different languages, mainly in Chinese, Portuguese and English. Macao has some of the highest density of media in the world — nine daily newspapers in Chinese, three daily newspapers in Portuguese, three daily newspapers in English, half a dozen weeklies in Chinese, one Portuguese-Chinese bilingual weekly, and one trilingual weekly in Portuguese, Chinese and English. There are also two television transmission channels in the territory and a radio channel broadcasting in Chinese and Portuguese. The two television channels include one in Chinese and one in Portuguese, which also broadcasts an English-language newscast.

In addition, there are also several private broadcasters in Macao such as Radio Vila Verde Lda, Macau Cable and two satellite television companies. The relation of these media to political power brings the media system closer to the territory of what Hallin and Mancini (2004) defined as the polarized pluralist model.

interviews, private interviews, and a public survey questionnaire. This information will be measured against international reports on the region, and used to formulate the likelihood of media influence or interference of the press.

It should be noted that allegations of media infringement it's not an allegation to be taken lightly, and barring concrete evidence emerging at a later date: there can be no definitive conclusion drawn from the information provided. The ethical ramifications for media tampering are far reaching, but they are also far from absolute. Just as we cannot be certain of the ethical culpability of the press, we also cannot be certain of its effects. As it remains, this paper should serve only as an analysis of possibilities and the evidence that exists towards the likelihood of those possibilities with regards to both the Chinese and Portuguese presses.

### **Overview of the city and its presses**

The unusual media situation of Macau exists largely because of the city's colourful cultural history. In 1887 Portugal obtained the rights to the city, to use it as its base of trading operations for the region, in effect becoming an extension of the greater Portuguese empire. Over the centuries the exact nature of Portugal's relationship with the city would change, but its involvement would not be completely removed until 1999. This political situation resulted in a preponderance of Portuguese immigrants coming to the area, and with them a need for Portuguese language information, news, and entertainment. Despite this, the city's proximity to the Canton region of China, ingenious population and their close cultural ties has ensured that Cantonese remains predominate in both speech and writing. If we fast forward to today, with Portugal having officially handed the city back to the People's Republic of China and the establishment of the Special Administrative Region, we can see that these factors have created a unique cultural landscape dissimilar to any other in the world.

As stated before, Macau contains a multitude of news outlets in three distinct language groups. It's English language offerings are perhaps unsurprisingly the smallest, with only two daily papers still in opera-

tion (*Macau Daily Times* and *Macau Daily News*). The only English-language television journalism in the city is a single nightly news-cast hosted on Macau's Portuguese channel. As one of the Special Administrative Region's two official languages, news in Portuguese is in somewhat greater supply. There are currently three Portuguese daily newspapers in Macau (*Hoje Macau*, *Tribuna de Macau* and *Ponto Final*), as well as two that publish weekly (the bilingual Portuguese-Chinese *Plataforma* and the trilingual Portuguese-English-Chinese *O Clarim*). There is also a Portuguese Language television station (*TDM*) as well as a Portuguese language radio station (*Rádio Macau*).

Compared to the other two offerings, Chinese language publications are easily the most prolific in Macau. There are currently nine Chinese daily newspapers in the city, and six that publish weekly. There are also several local channels that broadcast news in Cantonese. This is not surprising considering the region in which Macau resides, but it does demonstrate that despite the existence of three languages there both a clear numerical and monetary superiority regarding Cantonese Language sources.

### **Official aspects of the Chinese Language Press**

According to an analysis conducted by Wong, Rachel Hio on of the Chinese Language Press in Macau, we can be relatively certain of a few key journalistic aspects. We know that the Chinese Language Presses meet required governmental standards of performance and contribution to society (Wong, 2018, p.3), and that at least the three most read newspapers meet or exceed nine aspects of bench-marking criteria for meaningful journalistic contribution. This analysis of the top three newspapers in the Chinese Language also concluded that: "the quality of performance demonstrated by the three media outlets is valuable with no biases and there is criticism towards government performance and negative reporting." (Wong, 2018, p.3).

According to Wong, the three Chinese Language newspapers studied met or exceeded bench-marking standards associated with showing both positive and negative aspects of a given story, press neutrality towards its content, and exposing both pro and anti-

governmental sentiments. The papers also adequately represented multiple viewpoints without undue bias towards any single political or economic philosophy.

Legally, the Mainland China communication authority remains separated and distinct from the Macau regulation authority and does not have an influence on the content written (Biagi, 2006). Furthermore, the Macanese government ensures that reporters do not violate established guidelines and operate under recommended principles of journalistic ethics and integrity. Officially, investigative reporters are guaranteed freedom throughout the region, Wong concludes that the existence of this sort of free press creates a “unifying factor to the people”. (Wong, 2018, p. 24).

### **Controversial aspects of Chinese Language Press**

Whereas the legal documentation and official analysis of Chinese Language Press paints a clear picture towards a system with no discernible bias or influence, a public survey conducted by the University of Saint Joseph Communication and Media student’s, and interviews conducted with professionals working within the industry can lead to different conclusion.

According to the study (*“Public Satisfaction and Opinion on Local Newspapers in Macau”*, 2019) some 33% of respondents claimed that the local news was unreliable, despite 86% of those surveyed claiming that they read local newspapers. While these numbers are not conclusive, they do point to a certain segment of the population finding some fault beyond what is officially recorded.

In the past, Macanese newspapers have been accused of bias, with governmental intimidation as the primary accusation against a truly free press (Wong, 2018, p.24-25). These sorts of tactics corresponded directly to Mainland China’s actions regarding the mistreatment of journalists (Wong, 2018, p.24-25). If we look internationally, this opinion is still well shared among some researchers, who claim that media personnel in China have experienced the highest injustices as compared to the other states (Wong, 2018, p.24-25) and as a result it can be reasonably concluded that the products of such practices may not be up to ethical standards. It should be noted, however, that most international comparisons of the sort uti-

lize only data collected from Mainland China, and Macau’s media group remains officially independent of the mainland.

While there is no evidence to support any allegations of outright abuse or mistreatment, some of the responses by Chinese Language media professionals interviewed as part of Wong’s analysis indicate that governmental control and intervention may still be a very real aspect of the press in Macau. When Wong interviewed a representative of the Chinese media credited as “Interviewee A” (because of their wish to remain anonymous), Interviewee A expressed an opinion contrary to that which appears on the above legal declarations. Interviewee A alleged that freedom of press among Chinese language journalists was somehow curtailed as compared to Portuguese and English reporters, and that the government uses police engagement to stop some media reports in an effort to undermine media freedom (Wong, 2018, p.48-50).

Wong herself alleges that according to her own research, after the Chinese assumed formal sovereignty of Macau the media began focusing on the now Cantonese-language centered government of Macau, and as a result the media freedom of Chinese language press was curtailed. This resulted in the weakening of the freedom of the press for Chinese Language investigative journalists and media outlets within the region (Wong, 2018, p.48-50).

### **The changing Portuguese perspective**

It is an open secret that, during the period of Portuguese governmental control, news media in the Portuguese language was harshly controlled. The then primarily Portuguese press repeatedly complained about the infringement of journalistic freedoms, governmental coercion, and outright intimidation. The Macau handover to China in 1999 allowed for a comprehensive investigation into these complaints, and would eventually lead to the media freedoms that exist today (Wong, 2018, p.17).

Before the handover, the Macanese presses were predominantly Portuguese newspapers, with very little in the way of active Chinese print journalism. Portuguese ran newspapers were state operated and published almost exclusively in that language. This is an

aspect of Macau that has since been almost completely changed, with lucrative government subsidies existing to bolster a free press, but not outright control its content. It is speculated that due to these factors, while Macau was under Portuguese control, the Chinese language press may have actually more investigative freedom than their Portuguese press equivalents, owing to the governments lack of understanding Chinese language.

The owner of the Portuguese Daily Newspaper *Ponto Final*, Ricardo Pinto, believes that “until the handover there were more situationalist press organs, closer to power, more cordial with the performance of the administration of Rocha Vieira, and another press that in general did not share this position. Whoever wrote, the journalists, the analysts, had an attitude of greater detachment. *Ponto Final* which I have been directing since 1998, has always been seen as an opposition newspaper. I believe that newspapers should never be of power or opposition, except in extreme situations of violation of human rights or the most basic democratic rules. If this is not the case, newspapers should be as independent as possible, goals in the form they report and opinionated in the sections indicated for such. Interestingly enough, in Macao it has always been easier to find opinion makers willing to write opinion critically about power than the opposite. When someone close to Rocha Vieira's administration was asked to express his opinions in writing, he seldom did so.” (Simões, 2018, p.202)

There was an inhibition, a kind of embarrassment, in accepting to write for a newspaper of another kind. Having professional lawyers, as of 1999, journalists became directors and owners, maintaining a critical posture, but also some benevolence, as a result of some distance between the Portuguese community and the Chinese community, between the Chinese government and the Portuguese journalists; and among the natives of this space and those who feel invited yet not truly belonging to this land. Rocha Dinis, *Tribuna de Macau* administrator, points out that another way of perceiving Macao and the recent history of the local press, “was to make the” cut “in the signing of the Joint Declaration between Portugal and China on the reversal of Macao. When I arrived in 1982, I already

knew that Macao was a Chinese territory and that the Portuguese held political power here in the long run (it was not known when). The local press then imported the last ‘wars’ of the post-25th of November in Portugal, in particular, which had as its background the role of the military in politics. Civilian as it was, I did not miss an opportunity to use the newspaper against the opposing thesis, in which I was greatly aided by the clumsy governor and his proselytes who went about raising funds to create newspapers, and finally the presidential party, the PRD. One of the sequences of the government's thesis was to force the departure of the main Portuguese emigrants or Macao residents, replacing them by the military. The *Tribuna* was always on the side of the locals against such a policy that, as we see it today, was not desired, not even by the Chinese. To this day I am convinced that Almeida e Costa, who as Minister of Home Affairs had been involved in this dramatic phase of half a million Portuguese returning from ex-colonies, feared a similar situation in Macao.” (Simões, 2018, p.202)

He continued: “After the signing of the Joint Declaration, the situation changed completely and it returned to the idea that had presided over the creation of the Tribune: to bring Macao closer to Portugal and to do everything possible to collaborate in the popularization of the Portuguese language, that is, to have a cultural role (*lato sensu*) in Macao and neighboring regions, in addition to the newspaper that is traditional in newspapers. I recognize, however, that not all the press has followed these concerns.” (Simões, 2018, p.202) The complicity and the knowledge of the Other reveals to be lacunar in the territory, with the criticism nonetheless at times blunt. Ricardo Pinto remarked: “In public sector bodies such as Teledifusão de Macau (TDM), when the administration was Portuguese there was a concern of the Government with what was transmitted. During these years, I worked at TDM, attempts were often made to intervene and interfere with political power in the way information was provided. [These were] interference attempts similar to those in any part of the world.” (Simões, 2018, p.203) Gilberto Lopes, a press reporter who covered the Handover and director of Radio Macau since January 2000, reiterates a commonly

held view, "After the passage China, journalists were less pressured by political power. In its own right, even in the bodies which it administers (radio and TV are government agencies, TDM is a private company), the editorial departments of Portuguese-language media in Macao have never suffered any more pressure. More: in Macao one can speak of freedom of expression with the constraints derived from the practice of the profession anywhere in the world. In the Macau's Special Administrative Region (MSAR), however, lacking investigative journalism, opinions and counterpoints are given in an admittedly critical way, without government insurgencies or some kind of feedback. However, prior to the transfer of administration, the pressure was pronounced and the relationship with sources too close." (Simões, 2018, p.203)

Today the landscape is substantially different, with the majority of the Macanese press being of the Chinese Language variety. If it is accepted that during the period of Portuguese control the Portuguese speaking press received greater degrees of governmental control and interference, then it should also be accepted that with a Chinese-language government the Chinese-language press will likewise be curtailed. If we extend this assumption to the idea that during the era of Portuguese control the Chinese-language press enjoyed a greater investigative freedom, then we would likewise see an increase in the investigative freedoms enjoyed by the Portuguese-language press today.

After the handover, media freedom was supposedly protected by law and reporters were guaranteed rights to publish newspapers in different languages without restrictions. This guarantee was seen as a welcome and powerful step towards a truly free press, but just as the world itself was changing as the new millennium dawned, so too did the challenges and obstacles associated with the maintenance of a free and open press.

### **Modern obstacles of the free press**

Dominique Wolton considers that the obstacles to information, "do not result from lack of freedom but from the difficulty of managing the exercise." (Simões, 2018, p.132). This may be one of the most succinct ways in which we can sum up the modern obstacles in the path of the Macanese free press today. Whereas the intimidat-

tion and overt coercion that characterized the previous Portuguese regime may be a thing of the past, there are now numerous other ways in which various unauthorized entities may be impacting the state of the Macau press. Gilberto Lopes, director of Radio Macau in Portuguese language, makes the distinction that "informing is always communicating; but to communicate does not always mean to inform" (Simões, 2018, p.134), calling attention to the modern confusion resulting from the increasingly blurred line between opinion and the representation of factually correlated information. Compound this with the public's increasing need for the efficient management of excess information, and the seeming intractability and power of internet masses, and you create a nearly perfect opportunity to subvert the intent of a free press, if not the definition of it.

This obstacle is not unique to Macau itself, and has become an almost ubiquitous concept in the modern world. To assume that interested parties would not, or could not use technologies of citizen journalism, internet communication, or blatant misrepresentation under the guise of "opinion journalism" as a means to erode the intent of a free press is simply no longer viable. As stated by the Macao Portuguese and English Press Association president: "Political pressures, economic pressures, in some countries religious pressures, organized crime, have an expression that undermines the exercise of freedom of the press." (Simões, 2018, p.135).

### **The self-censorship problem**

Self-censorship cannot be quantifiably studied. As a measure that exists most often between an individual's actions and his or her own judgment, there is most often no trail to follow, no evidence to correlate, and no record to reference. It could also be argued that self-censorship is simply an aspect of journalism itself, as more things are thought of than ever written. Despite these claims, self-censorship at its core is still the knowing restriction of information from the public sphere, and thus can still be constituted as a real threat to any legitimately free press.

There are two types of self-censorship that exist in the context of journalistic endeavor. Self-censorship can originate from a journalist's own sense of propriety, ethics, and standard of practice, or it can be put

upon the journalist by an outside force. The second type of self-censorship is of primarily concern, though both aspects are at times strongly correlated. If the outside force is either unknown, pervasive, unrecognized, or simply ubiquitous with the “cost of doing business” then it can become internalized within a journalist, and thus simply accepted as a natural part of the journalistic process.

In Macau, there exists a series of unique propositions that create a unique sense of outside influences that may or may not influence journalistic output. Primarily, Macau has a lucrative government subsidy given to any press organization existing for five years unaided (South China Morning Post, 2005). This governmental subsidy does not come with any outwardly stipulations that may result in self-censorship, but it could also be argued that any reasonable journalist, let alone editor, would think twice about antagonizing the source of his or her own funds. This could be a contributing aspect of the perceived tendency of Chinese-language news sources to insist on government verification for all pieces of data. In such a setup, the government itself could be argued to be “on the same side” as the presses, and thus receive an unconscious bias in terms of journalistic content.

Reporters working for the Portuguese or English language presses also must necessarily be concerned with the inherent difficulties of obtaining information and clearance from the local, largely Chinese language government. This is a problem mirrored, in some ways, by the Chinese-language press and its reliance on governmental confirmation for nearly all reports. Francisco Pinto, *TDM* Director, thinks that “there is a serious problem in the Macao SAR that is not explored in the International Journalists Federation report. I am referring to the information that should be public and that it is under a system in which journalists are obliged to request it from the office of the Government spokeswoman, concealed. In view of this difficulty, which limits the exercise of freedom of the press, it also seems obvious that there is some editorial monolithism in the Chinese press world. The major Chinese-language media in Macao, whether television, radio or major newspapers, have an editorial perspective of non-opposition, of not

harsh criticism, of support, of care in the way they report themes that are fractured or sensitive. The Chinese press, when the news is not officially confirmed, refuses to make it public. This is not an excess of zeal but a reflection of a mentality which prevents them from working as journalists in our Western model.” (Simões, 2018, p.147).

The end result of this may be something of a stalemate. If the Chinese-language press is unwilling to make report, and the Portuguese and English presses are unable to make headway, then the only reasonable course is self-censorship. On this subject, Francisco Pinto states: “there are media professionals who work in Macao and exercise self-censorship. I also believe that there is some suppression of information depending on the editorial lines and a certain idea that the media should not contribute to social instability or address dissonant issues. In this kind of social consciousness, self-censorship is revealed.” (Simões, 2018, p.147)

#### **Conflicting hypothesis and incomplete data**

There exists today a disparity of available information regarding the exact state of both the Portuguese and Chinese language presses in Macau. Official documentation and evaluation point strongly to the existence of a free and open press, while at the same time public trust and statements from working professionals point in a contrary position. We cannot know if the documentation is accurate, and we similarly cannot know that if it is misleading. If it were to be misleading we cannot know whether it has been intentionally misdirected, or if it is simply an error of not sufficiently accounting for modern variables or other factors. Simply put, we cannot definitively conclude anything regarding the state of both the Portuguese or Chinese language press in Macau.

What we can do is propose several possible hypothesis that could be used to explain the existing information we possess. Each of these hypothesis is no more valid than any other, and it should be noted that it is entirely possible that none of them accurately reflect the current situation in Macau. With that in mind, the available data suggests a few potentialities that could, at least in part, make sense of the conflicting story of Macau's press.

### **The first proposal**

The first explanation for the disparity of data regarding press freedom and reliability is that a similar disparity exists between public opinion and evidence based fact. In this explanation, we can reasonably assume that factors of some kind have worked to erode the public trust in what are otherwise trustworthy institutions. While this may seem an overly simplistic explanation for the disparity, it should be noted that a disparity of this kind commonly exists regarding both governments and media institutions around the world (Friedman, 2018). Public opinion is something of a difficult beast to tame, and the idea that both the common populace and working professionals would have impressions conflicting with the established facts is not at all unusual.

We can trust that the safeguards provided by the government are working adequately to provide an effective working environment for journalists, and any small issues that may arise are not symptomatic of anything more substantial. This is not to say that the city or its laws are entirely without flaw, simply that the flaws that do exist in the protection of a free press may be relatively minor and without cause for concern.

We can assume in this explanation that both the Portuguese and Chinese language presses in Macau most likely have a roughly equal footing in regards to freedoms enjoyed and integrity of content. In this explanation, any disparity that may seem to emerge between the presses can be seen as part of the normal progression of a bilingual city with a complicated history and changing culture. We can cite as evidence for this claim both official statistics and the study and measurements of Rachel Wong (Wong, 2018).

### **The second proposal**

The second proposal that can be used to explain the disparity of available data is almost the polar opposite of the first. In this proposal we would assert that the disparity that exists does so because of a troubling and intentional misdirection of the press and, per consequence, we would assume that some of the ideals that have contributed to the harsh restriction of freedoms within the press of mainland

China have carried over to the SAR of Macau, and those involved have simply changed the tactics as to how these ideals are carried out.

If this explanation is to be believed then it would mean that a concentrated effort has been made within Macau, on behalf of the government or some other interested party, to subvert the freedom of the press in a quiet, subtle, and violence free manner. In this explanation both the Portuguese and Chinese language presses would be thoroughly compromised and controlled. If this were the case, then we would also have to explain why the two presses seemed to be affected by differing levels of control, and seemed to experience either greater or lesser engagement with governmental data and sources. The largest contributing factors to this proposal would be the existence of the disparity itself, and the various international reports regarding the nature of mainland China's treatment and control of the press.

The largest problem with such an explanation is that the subtle tactics necessary to exert such a complete and thorough control of the free press do not neatly coincide with that which mainland China reportedly uses. It is worth restating that, to date, there is still no substantial record of violence, intimidation, or other direct methods of coercion being used to control the Macanese free press. The idea that both presses could suffer a complete compromise of integrity using only "soft" methods of power is itself a difficult idea to accept, and the precision and scope with which this must have then been achieved stretches the credibility of this explanation. It is always far easier to imagine vast and intricate conspiracies than it is to orchestrate them, and while that does not preclude the possibility of such forces being at work, it does hamper the possibility of their existence.

### **The third proposal**

The third and final proposal is that there exists a state of some censorship and interference within Macau, but its existence is only partial, limited, and largely confined to more indirect methods. In this proposal, we assume that whatever attempts at subverting a free press that may exist do not have absolute authority, influence, or effectiveness. With this



explanation, we can reconcile the differences between official documentation and opinion by virtue of a partial subversion in intent, while still maintaining a professional and effective working press.

If we suppose this explanation of our data, we could also suppose that the forces influencing both the Portuguese and Chinese language presses may in fact be partially or wholly different. Factors both intentional (like coercion,) and unintentional (like the changing journalistic landscape,) can both play a part in the influence or subversion of the free press.

In this explanation, we could suppose that a greater emphasis is now placed on maintaining a stable and complimentary Chinese language press because of both Macau's greater political ties to mainland China, and its declining Portuguese population and influence. We could also suppose that in the past this same situation was almost exactly reversed. We can likewise reason that the factors influencing self-censorship may be intentional to some extent, and that they may have found greater effect within the Chinese language community than that of its Portuguese language counterpart. Finally, we can also hypothesize that the increasing reliance of the Chinese languages within the government of Macau may have a direct correlation to the influence put upon that press.

In this proposal, we see perhaps the most balanced reflection of the complicated issues that confront the world of modern journalism. If an outside agency were to attempt to influence a mostly free press, and it wished to do so in a subtle but effective manner, then the circumstances of Macau's two language system would certainly be conducive to such an arrangement. Establishing a system in which access to information and confirmation is a professional norm limited at, a controlling agency does not guarantee any sort of press control, just as a reliance of heavy government subsidy to ensure continued operation does not necessarily create goodwill towards that same government. These factors do enable the possibility for both of these things, without the need for overt intimidation, violence, or other methods of coercion. Similarly, if a culture of self-censorship can be created and maintained, there becomes no need for any external censorship.

This proposal would not necessarily claim that there exists, any definite cases for interference or coercion at the systemic level, but merely that the possibilities become too likely to conclude that complete freedom of the press is unlikely. The evidence to support this proposal would be the same primary evidence that contributes to the disparity in the first place: the official governmental data and studies, the opinions of the people, and the prevalence of modern trials and influences upon journalistic integrity.

### **Concluding remarks**

There can be no conclusive determining regarding true press freedom in Macau, and perhaps this statement can be applied elsewhere as well. Issues of self-censorship, partisanship, or cultural loyalty exist in cities and countries around the world, and most of the time there is simply no reliable measurement to determine their impact. We can be reasonably certain that in Macau, at least, there is a strong and professional journalistic element determined to provide relevant and ethically sound coverage. We can likewise understand, through the official statements and laws of the local government, that there are at least some in power who are committed to the ideals of a free and open press.

Beyond this, however, the specifics of the situation become too difficult to state with any certainty. In this way, perhaps, can Macau be seen as a microcosm for a larger multilingual world that is presented at all times with issues of impartiality and ideological influence. The presses of Macau each struggle in their own way, as all presses do. The struggles they face may be generated intentionally, or as simply a by-product of their circumstances. The adversity that both Portuguese and Chinese language presses face may result in differing degrees of publication freedom.

At this time, and with this data, we simply cannot know the true extent of these forces. In today's world, both public trust and press freedom are increasingly difficult to gauge. Napoleon Bonaparte once said: "*Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets,*" and it is for this sentiment, perhaps, that we must always be always vigilant of those who seek to remove the power of the free press.

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