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**CHANGING POLITICAL ECONOMY, POLICIES, AND JOURNALISM:
THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN JOURNALISTS, MEDIA
ORGANIZATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT IN TAIWAN
(2003-2013)**

Abstract:

Over the last decade, the media environment in Taiwan has changed dramatically. A global magazine 'Foreign Policy', on 20th February 2014, specifically discussed these issues and described Taiwanese media as sensationalist without depth. In deed, the exaggerated and lurid news contents are the productions of Taiwanese journalism; however, the most important question worthy of examining is the phenomenon or the problem embedded in the political economy, the policies and the journalistic field in Taiwan. This research focuses on how the changing political economy and policies have changed media environment and the conflicts journalists have struggled towards media organizations and the government from 2003 to 2013.

In 2003, the government in Taiwan announced a policy, governmental product placement, in order to promote policies or governors in news without informing audiences or readers the news was purchased by the government. This policy has changed the media environment in Taiwan for more than ten years due to the so- called democratic government using money to manipulate journalism and interfere with the production of news. This paper explores how governmental product placement has influenced the media environment and the conflicts of individual journalists with the government and media organizations from 2003 to 2013. The concepts of Bourdieu, the critical political economy of journalism and the crisis of neoliberalism are the theoretical framework of this research.

This research adopted semi-structured, in-depth interviewing to do fieldwork in Taiwan from 17th July to 21st September 2013 and interviewed 30 journalists working for the most influential 13 TV stations. The informants were 7 males and 23 females with 2 to 21-year working experiences. Their positions were junior journalists, senior journalists, TV presenters and chief editors.

The findings of this research are mainly four aspects: First, news in Taiwan has become definitely a commodity with very clear selling and purchasing deals. Sometimes, it might be buy one get one free deal. Sometimes, news might be not for individual sale, but for a package sale with advertisements.

Second, journalists towards the conflicts against professional journalism might choose to compromise due to 'salary'. Without enough economic capital, they do not dare to fight. They choose to survive rather than fight for professional journalism. Even though few journalists try to fight for professionalism, finally, they might be disappointed and choose to leave the journalistic industry.

Third, even though journalists try hard to accumulate their capital, when they achieve higher

positions, they are satisfied with what they own, the economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. They might complain the media environment, but they see no reasons to fight for professional journalism.

Fourth, the government in Taiwan might interfere with the process of news production. The government might directly ask journalists to report the specific angles or even ask to check the news content beforehand. The roles of media organizations are essential; if media organizations allow the government to check the news before broadcasting, journalists might suffer more conflicts and struggle more.

Keywords:

governmental product placement; news; commodity; professional journalism; conflict; field; habitus; capital; critical political economy; neoliberalism

JEL Classification: P16, F68, D29