The Erosion of Press Freedom: An Examination of Hong Kong’s Book Publishing and Journalism Industries Post-handover

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Abstract
Hong Kong was once touted for the openness of its press and its vibrant independent publishing scene. Now, seemingly reputable news organizations, such as the South China Morning Post, are undergoing editorial shifts and engaging in self-censorship while independent book publishers are being replaced by Chinese state-owned companies. These changes are a result of years of direct and indirect pressure on these industries by the Chinese government, which began even before the 1997 handover. In the past decade, these tactics have become more overt and their effects on the city’s news organizations and book publishers are increasingly visible. Through interviews with journalists and book publishers, textual analyses and a look into the operations of Hong Kong’s journalism and book publishing industries since the handover, this thesis presents the various methods utilized by the Chinese government to exert control and outlines the toll they have taken on Hong Kong’s press freedom.

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Hong Kongers may still enjoy a degree of freedom mainland Chinese can only envy, with freedom of assembly, a free press and an unfettered judicial system. But almost every day brings new evidence those freedoms are slipping away, with the territory falling farther under Beijing’s shadow. During the Hong Kong handover talks in the 1980s, China rejected Britain’s desire to continue running the territory, and instead proposed that Hong Kong become a semi-autonomous region of China. Books banned in mainland China can be hard to find on the shelves of Hong Kong. Credit...Philippe Lopez/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images. What we found. The long reach of the mainland. The independent book publishing industry has also taken a big hit. The Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents’ Club occupies a former dairy warehouse from the early 20th century. (Jeff Stein/For The Washington Post). By Jeff Stein. “We reminded them that press freedom is a right guaranteed under Hong Kong law, which the representatives acknowledged,” the FCC said in a statement after the June meeting. Now director of the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at the University of Hong Kong, Richburg credited Schneider with “exactly the levelheaded, balanced approach and leadership we need, never wavering to defend press freedom while steering clear of histrionics.” AD. AD.