

Always Keep in Control: The Pattern of TV Policy Changes in China

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Abstract : China is a country with a distinct cultural system. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the central factor for everything, which naturally includes culture. There are quite a lot of cultural policies in China. The same goes for TV dramas. This paper traces the evolution of Chinese TV drama policy since 1986, examines the realistic situation behind the changes, and explores the structure and role of the government in shaping the process. Using historical documents and media reports, it first analyzes four key time nodes: 1986, 2003, 2012, and 2022. It shows how the policy shifts from restricting private production to opening up to public participation, from imposing one censorship to another, and from promoting some content to restricting some other area. It finds that the policy process is not simply rectilinear but rather wandering between deregulation and strengthening control. Secondly, it divides the policies into "basic" policies that establish the overall layout and more refined "strategic" policies that respond to more refined needs. It argues that the "basic" policy process is caused by China's political, economic, and cultural system reform, and then the "strategic" policy process is affected by more environmental factors, such as the government's follow-up development strategy, industrial development, technological innovation, and specific situations. Thirdly, it analysis the main body of the 104 policies from 2000 to 2021 and puts these subjects into China's power structure and cultural system, revealing that the policy issuers are all under the highest leadership of the Chinese Central Committee. Further, the paper challenges the typical description of Chinese cultural policy, which focuses on state control exclusively, identifies the forces within and outside the system that participate in or affect the policy-making process, and reveals the inter-subjective mechanism of policy change. In conclusion, the paper reveals that China's TV drama policy is under the unified leadership of the Party and the government, which greatly guarantees the consistency of the overall direction of cultural policy, that is, the right to speak firmly in the hands. The forces within the system can sometimes promote policy changes due to common development needs. However, folk discourse is only the object of control: when it breeds a certain amount of industrial space, the government will strengthen control over this space, suppress its potential "adverse effects", and instead provide protection and create conditions for the cultivation and growth of its mainstream discourse. However, the policy combination of basic policy and strategic policy, while having a strong effect and emergency capacity, also inhibits the innovation and diversification of the TV drama market. However, the state's substantial regulation will continue to exist in the future.

Keywords : TV Policy, China, policy process, cultural policy, culture management

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