Political Communication in Asia

Edited by
Lars Willnat and **Annette Aw**

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This edited volume provides a critical review of political communication research conducted in Asia over the past twenty years. Each chapter focuses on studies published in a specific Asian country, selected according to the level of contribution made to the field of political communication in Asia. Covering China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India, the book's primary objective is to review the unique theoretical accomplishments made by Asian communication scholars, thus contributing to a better awareness and understanding of political communication research in Asia.

The contributors are well-respected Asian media scholars writing on political communication in their countries of origin. Each author reviews studies conducted and published in his/her native country and language(s). This book provides a first review of these studies, most of which have never been published in English, and makes them available to international scholars. The contributors discuss each country's political background, and address the findings and conclusions of the political communication studies conducted in their respective countries during the past two decades. The chapters focus on insights that have been made by adapting Western media theories to the unique social, cultural, or political contexts that exist in each country. The authors also point out possible gaps in the current research within their respective countries and make recommendations for future studies.

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Contents

Foreword

It is difficult to find a person who has never gossiped. We gossip, therefore we are. Nobel laureates gossip, so do illiterates. Street vendors gossip, so do university professors. They only differ in how and what they gossip about. Gossip glues human beings together as families, as communities, as societies, as nations, or as the entire world. Human beings have been gossiping ever since their appearance on earth. Early people gossiped about survival, how to hunt animals or to cook food. Or, they gossiped about how to nurture their folks. Modern people gossip about survival and their folks too, but their gossip has become a lot more complicated.

The topics modern people gossip about range from the simple to the most complicated. And one of the most gossiped about topics is, of course, politics. People gossip about their political leaders, their leadership styles, their performance, and their popularity. This book focuses on how Asians gossip about politics and how their elites gossip, naturally with great pomp and sophistication, about politics.

Most societies differ greatly in their political set-up. They can be conservative or liberal, autocratic or democratic, socialistic or capitalistic. Societies with more and tighter controls usually see political gossip constrained or limited in content and in rhetoric, whereas societies with fewer controls allow gossip about any imaginable topic. However, nearly all societies have experienced periods of totalitarian controls or laissez-faire. As people have designed different political institutions in different places and at different times, gossip about such arrangements and their operations became important topics for systematic investigation. It is therefore no surprise that the field of political communication has developed into an area of intensive academic focus and intellectual pursuit. As this volume demonstrates, research on political communication in Asia is just as diversified as Asia itself. Many of the topics, concepts, and methods synthesized span geographical and political boundaries.

Asia's 22 countries are governed by democracies and monarchies and their economies differ in degrees of sophistication and openness. Asia's 3.8 billion people speak vastly different languages and worship different gods. Thus, understanding the complexity of political communication in Asia is obviously a

challenging task and requires great collaborative efforts and wisdom. The study of political communication should help to better grasp the profound changes now taking place in Asia. The enormous volume of research discussed in this book speaks unequivocally of the contributions made by the editors and the authors. Without question, the findings are expected to spur further interest in research on political communication within and outside Asia.

Many years ago, American sociologist Robert E. Park considered the newspaper the talk of the town. But as much as a town has its "town talk," a globalized world should have its "global talk." Many of the Asian countries and their peoples that have been absent in the global talk deserve our intellectual attention. Ask not who is participating in this talk. Ask whether their contributions to this talk can enhance our grasp of the realities and the complexities in this region. Only then will both Orientalism and Occidentalism disappear or shrink.

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Introduction

The Big Unknown

Political Communication in Asia

Lars Willnat and Annette Aw

Communication studies have a long tradition in Asia and have contributed greatly to what we know about the mass media in Asia today (Chu, 1988). The development of communication research in Asia, however, has been supplemented only recently with research focusing on political communication processes. In Hong Kong and China, for example, the first political communication studies appeared in the early 1980s (Chan, 1992). Whereas many of the earlier political communication studies from Asia focused on general descriptions of the interactions between the media and the state, the past 20 years have been marked by a slow increase in the number of studies that pay more attention to media effects and public opinion formation.

Unfortunately, many of these studies have not been published in English and are only available in national or regional journals. Moreover, the growth in political communication research in Asia has been rather uneven between countries. While the number of political communication studies from Japan, Korea, and Singapore published in English-language journals has been rising slowly during the past two decades, research output from other important Asian countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, has been insignificant. Considering the unique political, social, and cultural characteristics of these countries (not to mention their importance based on sheer population size), this indicates a major gap in Asian communication research.

There are a number of reasons for this uneven distribution of political communication research in Asia. The dominance of communication research from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, for example, can be partially explained by the large number of Chinese communication scholars trained in the United States. Many of these scholars today have successfully published in English-language books and journals, often with a focus on their native countries. The lack of publications from other Asian countries is likely the result of political, social, and cultural differences that make it difficult to produce media research similar to what has been done in the United States and other Western nations. Researchers in China and Singapore, for example, cannot conduct public opinion polls that investigate perceptions of political leaders or candidates. The same has been true, until recently, in Malaysia and Indonesia. The restricted freedom to conduct

political communication studies in Asia is compounded by the small research community, the often limited financial and institutional support, and the size and quality of research infrastructure and personnel.

The limited number of political communication studies from Asia can be also explained by differences in the political systems themselves, which make it difficult to apply theories of media effects developed in Western democracies. For example, the procedures of how political candidates are chosen and elected in Asia, the way people participate in politics, and how political information is discussed in the media, all differ significantly from political processes in Western nations. It is therefore hardly surprising that very few Asian media studies have analyzed the role of the media in elections and in public opinion formation based on political communication theories developed to fit the political systems of Western nations.

In addition, real and perceived differences in culture have caused many Asian researchers to question the applicability of Western communication theories in Asia (see, for example, Dissanayake, 1988). Critiques of Western communication theories, such as that by the renowned Chinese communication scholar Godwin Chu (1988), argue that the "Western perspective of communication research and theory, by and large, ignores the social structure and pays relatively scant attention to the societal functions of communication. In the Western perspective of communication theory, culture is rarely explicitly taken into consideration in the research conceptualization, because culture is usually not regarded as a variable" (pp. 205–206). Chu also claims that the focus of Western communication research on the individual and the reliance on quantitative methodology limits research to "problems that can be handled by quantitative measures and statistical tests" (p. 206). The result, so Chu, is that "communication research in the Western perspective tends to become repetitive and lacks a clear focus, tackling problems that may seem to be trivial or irrelevant, although methodologically rigorous" (p. 206).

The main goal of this book is to provide a critical review of the political communication research conducted in Asia during the past 20 years. This particular time frame allows a fairly comprehensive review of the most important studies conducted in Asia since the emergence of political communication as a distinct academic field in the chosen countries. The focus of this book is on political communication studies conducted in the following nine Asian countries or territories: China, Hong Kong (SAR), Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. We chose these countries because of their significant contributions to the field of political communication in Asia and the relative large number of political communication studies available in each country.

We have gathered a group of well-respected media scholars who will each review studies from their native countries. Since most of these studies were written in languages other than English, this book provides the first review of such studies available to international scholars. The contributors to this book first were asked to discuss each country's political background in order to provide the nec-

essary context for understanding political communication studies conducted in their countries. We then asked the authors to discuss the findings and conclusions of the political communication studies conducted in their respective countries during the past 20 years.

What we hope to accomplish here is to point out any unique theoretical accomplishments that have been made by Asian scholars of political communication. We are particularly interested in any possible insights that have been made by adapting Western media theories to the unique social, cultural, or political contexts that exist in all Asian countries. The argument that Western media theories might not be applicable in Asia because of the significant cultural, social, and political differences that exist between East and West is certainly not new and has been made by scholars decades ago. However, most of the research that has tried to adapt Western media theories in Asia has not been communicated successfully to the international academic community because many of these studies have been published in national journals only and therefore remained inaccessible to those who are not familiar with a particular Asian language.

Another goal of this book is to provide a critical overview of what has been done in the field of political communication within each Asian country and what might be missing. We asked each author to point out possible gaps in the current political communication research within their respective country and to make clear recommendations for future studies. Overall, we hope that this book will contribute to a better awareness and understanding of political communication research from Asia.

The book starts with Francis Lee and Joseph M. Chan's discussion of the historical and institutional developments that have influenced the mass media in Hong Kong during the past two decades. Specifically, the authors focus on the political democratization of Hong Kong during the last years of British rule and the power transfer to China that took place in 1997. Based on these two important developments, which have significantly altered the political communication environment in Hong Kong, the authors review studies on media strategies in dealing with political pressure, self-censorship, the rise of alternative media, and public attitudes toward press freedom and media's role in politics.

The review demonstrates that political communication in Hong Kong has traditionally revolved around the "China factor" both before and after the handover. During British rule, the critical pro-China press helped to expand the ideological space in Hong Kong and prevented the colonial government from enforcing draconian laws. The growing political influence of China after the handover in 1997 dramatically redefined the parameters for political communication in Hong Kong and refocused research efforts on press freedom, self-censorship, and the democratic function of the press.

As a result of the dramatic political changes that took place in Hong Kong during the past 20 years, scholars there have spent more effort on structural and institutional analysis than Western media researchers. However, while the political changes in Hong Kong since 1997 have made it an ideal place for the study of

political communication, media researchers have found it difficult to generalize their findings and theoretical concepts to the international context. The authors call for more studies that relate social change to individual practices and for more research on elections, public opinion formation, and other areas that prevail in mainstream political communication in Western nations.

In chapter 2, Zhou He discusses the practice of political communication in China's "dualistic discourse universes." According to the author, political communication in China takes place in an "official" and a "private" discourse universe. While the official universe occupies the public space of expression, especially the government-controlled mass media, the private universe consists primarily in the oral or interpersonal sphere. Zhou He analyses the formation of these conflicting discourse universes during China's transition from communism to bureaucratic capitalism, the research tradition of Chinese intellectuals, and the difficult interaction between Western political communication theories and the Chinese context. In addition, the author provides an overview of political communication studies in China, which significantly differ from Western media studies because of philosophical and political differences between China and the West.

As a result, the integration of Western political communication theories into China's political reality has been difficult. Many established political communication theories are not applicable in China because they assume free and democratic elections. According to Zhou He, the political environment, the Chinese way of examining human relations, the shortage of suitable theories, and a general lack of empirical research have severely limited the progress of political communication studies in China. Moreover, since the mass media is seen as a political tool in Communist China, a specialized academic field of political communication is fairly meaningless in a country where most public communication is political propaganda. More importantly, in order to protect themselves from governmental retribution, scholars in China have to disguise the true meaning of their studies with politically correct jargon, vague euphemism, and Marxist terminology.

In chapter 3, Chingching Chang analyzes the development of political communication studies that have been published in major Taiwanese communication journals. The author conducts this analysis by first dividing the studies into three major time periods, which have characterized Taiwan's political development during the past four decades: The first period between 1967 and 1987 was shaped by martial law, which allowed the Taiwanese government to exercise firm censorship and require the mass media to carry pro-government propaganda. The second period starts in 1987 with the rescission of martial law and the gradual transformation of Taiwan into a free society. The third period begins in 1996 with the first free presidential election and the defeat of the ruling Kuomingtang party.

According to Chang, political communication research in each of the three time periods reflected the distinct characteristics of each period. During the first period, media scholars could do little except discuss political communication

in other democratic countries, hoping that Taiwan eventually would develop into a democratic society. During the second period, political communication researchers put their efforts into reporting the diversity in news coverage resulting from the lift of martial law and depicting the strategies of campaigning resulting from the loosening of campaign restrictions. In the third period, researchers have highlighted the campaign strategies of political candidates and the effect of campaigning on political outcomes.

Chang notes that that the majority of the political communication research in Taiwan has been empirical rather than interpretative or critical. According to her review, most Taiwanese research in this area has developed without a solid theoretical framework, has failed to formulate and test new theories, and did not challenge or extend Western media theories. The author also sees a lack of research on election campaigning, political socialization, and the development of public policies and political issues in the Taiwanese mass media. Similar to other authors in this book, Chang believes that it is most important to develop new theories that take into account the unique cultural and political differences that exist between Taiwan and other countries.

In chapter 4, Terence Lee and Lars Willnat provide an overview of Singapore's authoritarian political and legal structures and the resulting political control of the media. The authors first discuss the tactics and strategies employed by the Singapore government to manage and control the traditional and digital media, which have severely undermined a free and democratic discussion of political issues in Singapore. The chapter focuses on the potential role of new communication technologies in Singapore, which might pressure the government to widen the margins of political participation and communication. However, despite the fact that Singapore has one of the highest Internet penetration rates in the world, the authors argue that the population is generally uncomfortable about using it for political ends because of the tight political controls and regulations that have been imposed by the government.

Singapore's oppressive political atmosphere is also reflected in the paucity of academic research on political communication in this small city-state. Compared to other Asian countries, communication research in Singapore, the authors contend, is lagging far behind in quality and quantity and tends to be descriptive rather than theoretical or critical. The authors argue that political communication research has been suppressed by Singapore's tight social and political controls and that very few academics dare to test the boundaries of political deliberation.

In chapter 5, Effendi Gazali, Dedy Nur Hidayat, and Victor Menayang first examine the role of the Indonesian media during President Suharto's authoritarian regime, the political revolution of 1998, and the following political reform era. This overview is followed by a comprehensive review of political communication studies conducted in Indonesia during the past four decades.

The findings of their review indicate that political communication research since 1998 has expanded to formerly taboo topics and that it has started to

employ a multi-disciplinary approach. Moreover, Indonesian communication researchers have not only used theories that originated within communication or political science, but also started to incorporate theories from other fields, such as sociology or political economics. However, the authors also note that the field of political communication in Indonesia is just beginning to realize its potential, and that the total number of studies on political communication in this young democracy is still small. What is needed, according to the authors, are more political communication studies at the community level, which take into account Indonesia's many different religions, ethnicities, and cultures. Since, the authors argue, Indonesia's media has only recently learned to interact responsibly in the political arena, more research should be conducted to analyze power relations between the Indonesian government, the media, and the public during elections.

In chapter 6, Ezhar Tamam and Manimaran Govindasamy discuss the development of political communication practices and research in Malaysia with a focus on how the media have been used during general elections. After providing a short profile of Malaysia's political system and media environment, the authors analyze new developments in Malaysian election campaigning and provide a comprehensive review of the current state of political communication research in their country.

The authors note that, similar to Indonesia, the study of political communication is an emerging academic field in Malaysia. While the number of political communication studies in Malaysia is increasing every year, this growth is slow and disjointed. Most of the studies that have been conducted are descriptive and focus on basic analyses of source and media content relationships. Empirical tests of even the most established communication theories in the Malaysian context are extremely limited. Moreover, research proposing theories or voter decision-making models that would be applicable to the specific social, political and multi-cultural environment in Malaysia do not exist. Similarly, only a few recent studies have analyzed political media effects during elections. The authors conclude that this lack of theoretical development in Malaysian political communication studies shows a lack of concerted effort and systematic research approaches among Malaysian communication scholars.

In chapter 7, Toshio Takeshita and Masamichi Ida present an overview of political communication research in Japan since the 1980s. To provide a historical context, the authors begin by exploring trends of Japanese politics during the past 25 years. This is followed by a discussion of the current state of the Japanese media and the unique characteristics of political news coverage in Japan. The authors argue that traditional mass media have played a relatively passive role in Japan's political communication environment because of a general reluctance to state clear political positions and the influence of the Japanese press clubs. As a result, the media often passively relay the agenda of the sources, reflecting the interests of the elite and imposing them on the general public. However, the growing commercialization of the Japanese mass media has increased the media's

potential for influencing the public with news that is no longer following the traditional model of a “neutral" press.

The authors also provide a fascinating discussion about the adaptation of Western communication theories by Japanese scholars. Similar to what has been pointed out by authors from other countries represented in this book, Takeshita and Ida argue that the applicability of Western media theories is contingent on cultural, social, and psychological conditions that encourage the effect processes in a particular country. The authors provide a number of examples for how these adaptations have been recognized and successfully investigated by Japanese communication scholars. Considering the state of communication studies in other Asian countries, it is probably fair to say that Japanese scholars have made the most progress in adapting and testing possible variations of Western communication theories within an Asian context.

In chapter 8, Sung Tae Kim and Hyok Nam Kwon discuss the findings of a content analysis of all political communication studies published in the three most prestigious South Korean communication journals. The authors argue that the relatively limited number of political communication studies in Korea is due to the repressive political environment, which dominated Korea until the 1980s, the public’s mistrust of the press, and the deeply rooted political regionalism in Korea. The content analysis also shows that political communication scholars in Korea mostly have focused on election campaigns and voting patterns and that a majority of the analyzed studies relied on communication theories that were quantitative rather than qualitative in nature.

The authors also discuss the findings of a small survey conducted among political communication scholars, which provides the base for recommendations for the future of political communication research in Korea. As indicated by Korean communication scholars, what is most needed to further political communication studies in Korea is more academic interaction among scholars, a systematic compilation of research data and output, and more external funding. The authors conclude that only interaction with other academic fields such as political science, sociology, or psychology is likely to enhance political communication research because it allows the application of diverse theories and research methods for the realm of political communication.

Finally, in chapter 9, Kavita Karan examines the literature on political communication strategies and voting behavior in India since 1947. Karan also provides an overview of the various channels of political communication used in India, such as interpersonal communication, mass mediated communication, and new media technologies.

The easing of government controls on television and radio in the late 1990s and the emergence of international satellite and cable channels have allowed greater political debate about election issues in the electronic media. Karan argues that in a country fragmented by region, religion, caste, community, and rural-urban divides, political parties have evolved strategies to woo and win the voters, reaching them through various traditional and innovative communication

technologies. Thus, what makes Indian elections unique is the multiplicity of communication channels, which range from the traditional beating of drums and street theater, to hi-tech advertising through the mass media, video-on-wheels, Web sites, multimedia, compact discs, and mobile phones. Moreover, in contrast to most other democracies around the world, electioneering became a part of the entertainment culture, where the strategy was first to entertain and then to inform.

Despite India's vibrant democracy, which is characterized by a free and outspoken mass media, studies on political communication have been fairly limited. Early studies in India focused on interpersonal communication processes about pressing issues such as poverty, corruption, or cultural and religious divisions. Efforts to study political communication during elections began only in the mid-1980s, when political campaigns became professionally managed and mass media began to be used extensively for political advertising. Consequently, Karan calls for more studies that investigate the impact of media in Indian elections and analyze the interaction of interpersonal communication, the mass media, and traditional media in more detail. In addition, the author believes that more studies are needed that investigate the impact of new communication technologies during elections, especially those that represent a relatively cheap and direct way for political campaigns to reach voters throughout India.

Overall, the future of Asian political communication research is bright and full of opportunities for researchers interested in expanding the findings of Western media studies and in reexamining established media theories in different social and cultural contexts. We certainly hope that an increased awareness of political communication studies from Asia will help to generate new ideas and a better understanding of how profoundly the media affect our lives around the world.

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Chapter 1

Making Sense of Political Transition

Political Communication Research in Hong Kong

Francis L. F. Lee and Joseph M. Chan

In the past three decades, Hong Kong has experienced a unique social and political transition, transforming from a British colony to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The process was marked by major developments including the partial democratization of the political system, the rise of local political parties, changes in the participatory culture of the public, and the increasing influence of China on local matters.

All these developments occurred in a society that has long boasted a well-established, modern mass media system. In the early 1980s, there were already more than 15 local daily newspapers, two free-to-air television broadcasters, and two radio broadcasters serving a population of six million people. Nowadays, the range of choices for the seven million Hong Kong residents has been broadened to include a number of international and regional dailies that can be bought on the streets, an additional local radio broadcaster, a number of cable or digital television services, and all kinds of news outlets around the world easily available on the Internet.

The combination of rapid political change and a rich media system has made Hong Kong an exciting place for the study of political communication. There is an abundance of theoretically and socially significant research topics. The 1980s also witnessed the early consolidation of the communication research community in Hong Kong. The first generation of local communication researchers obtained their doctorates, mostly in the United States, and returned to Hong Kong throughout the decade. They soon found themselves facing the so-called "1997 question," that is, the negotiation, and soon the confirmation, of Hong Kong's return to China in 1997. Unsurprisingly, the relationship between the media and political transition has become the underlying theme running through most, if not all, political communication studies in Hong Kong in the past 25 years.

The political transition meant that researchers in Hong Kong had to be constantly aware of how the context in which they conducted their studies changed over time. More concretely, contextual changes have two major implications on political communication research in the city. First, not unlike what exists in other transitional societies, many Hong Kong researchers have been particularly concerned with macro-level institutional and historical analysis that addresses

two intertwined questions: 1) the changing role of the media in the political process, and 2) the relationship between the media and political power. Some of these studies are conceptual explications of media models that help people make sense of how the Hong Kong media operate in the political process. Other studies document changes in media functions, the press system, and journalistic paradigms in the city. Implicitly or explicitly, this body of literature treats the media system, journalistic paradigms, and the degree and nature of press freedom as dependent variables influenced by changes in the distribution of social and political power.

Second, when more specific empirical phenomena are concerned, there has not been a fixed agenda for political communication research in Hong Kong. Instead, the importance of different topics rose and fell throughout the period. Media effects and performance in elections, for example, has become a topic for research in Hong Kong only since the late 1980s, when democratic elections for the Legislative Council (LegCo) were institutionalized. In the early 1990s, the political power of the legislature increased and the number of democratically elected politicians continued to rise. As a result, the significance of election studies in Hong Kong surged as well. However, after the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, democratization became stagnant. The legislature could play only a minor role in monitoring the government. Though researchers continued to conduct studies on the media and elections, the importance of such studies declined alongside the decrease in importance of the legislature itself. Nevertheless, any future changes in Hong Kong politics that might boost the importance and democratic character of representative bodies are likely to reinvigorate research on the media and elections.

This chapter reviews political communication research in Hong Kong in three parts. Part one reviews the historical and institutional analysis of media politics in Hong Kong. The next two parts review studies on more specific political communication phenomena. The significance of these phenomena was derived from two overarching trends of political developments in the city. One of these two developments was political democratization. It provided the background for studies on media effects on public opinion, the media and elections, the relationship between media and new political institutions, and political discourse and media representations of public opinion. The other development was the power transfer from Britain to China. It was a process of de-colonization as well as political, social, and cultural integration with China. It provided the background for studies on media strategies in dealing with political pressure, self-censorship, the rise of alternative media, and public attitudes toward press freedom and media's role in politics.

Historical Transformation of Media and Politics

In the 1980s, as political communication research began to develop in Hong Kong, researchers found that the city had a seemingly free and pluralistic media

system. Newspapers espoused a spectrum of ideological positions and did not refrain from criticizing either the Chinese or the British colonial government. At the same time, Hong Kong journalists perceived their professional roles largely within the contours of a liberal conception of the press. A representative survey of journalists conducted in 1990 found that Hong Kong journalists regarded themselves as professionals independent from political and economic power. Most journalists also upheld the norms of objectivity and neutrality in news reporting and regarded providing information for the public and monitoring the government as important media functions (Chan, Lee, & Lee, 1996).

This situation gave rise to two obvious questions. First, what were the conditions for the formation of a "free press" within an authoritarian colonial polity? Second, how would the media respond to the upcoming political changes? A range of historical and institutional analysis has provided many insights on these two questions.

Formation of the "Free Press" from the 1950s to 1980s

Press freedom has never been something that could be taken for granted in Hong Kong, where the British colonial government has long established repressive press laws. For instance, the 1951 Control of Publications Consolidation Ordinance empowered the government to shut down newspapers and confiscate printing presses "under emergency conditions," and allowed that "any facets of the news media affecting morals, health as well as public safety and order could lead to fines and lengthy incarcerations" (Chan, 1988, p. 164; also see Cheung, 2002). As Chan and Lee (1991) noted: "Had these [laws] all been faithfully executed, Hong Kong would have written a very dark page in the [world's] history of press freedom" (p. 8).

Fortunately, the colonial government seldom invoked the repressive laws. Cheung (2002) argued that such prudence in exercising legal power was consistent with the "British colonial style of governing to retain a minimum control of public order by mixing colonial authoritarianism with common law liberalism" (p. 195). Yet, up until the 1980s, the British colonial regime was able to remain largely faithful to their governing philosophy because of two factors (Chan & Yau, 1987; Chan, 1988; Chan & Lee, 1991). The first factor was China. Due to the concern over a possible infiltration of communist propagandists into the territory, many press laws enacted in Hong Kong after WWII were designed to deal with the communist and leftist press. However, the Hong Kong government tried their best not to provoke China, because it recognized that China had the military capability to control Hong Kong and because it was needed as an important trade partner. As a result, the colonial government was reluctant and strategic in exercising its legal power over the press (Chan, 1988).

Certainly, the colonial government would not have tolerated a press threatening its rule. Therefore, the non-exercise of legal power was also partly due to the docility of the Hong Kong media in face of the colonial government at the time.

This, in turn, was the result of Hong Kong's own social formation and the position of the media system in it. Since the 1950s, Hong Kong had developed as a refugee society as many people from mainland China entered the city, fleeing the political chaos and natural disasters in the mainland. These people did not have a strong attachment to the local society and did not have strong demands on the government. They relied mainly on interpersonal (especially familial) networks to deal with their livelihood problems. Politically, many of them were apathetic. They preferred stability and had no interest in pushing for more opportunities for democratic participation. At the same time, the colonial government did not intervene directly into social and economic matters. The result was what Lau (1982, p. 157) described as a "minimally integrated social political system" in Hong Kong.

In most societies around the world, one of the most fundamental roles of the media is to facilitate communication between the government and the public, no matter whether such communication is dominated by top-down government propaganda or by bottom-up public opinion expression. In colonial Hong Kong before the 1970s, however, minimal integration between the political system and the society meant that the media were neither propaganda machines for the government nor platforms for public communication on local matters. Three major studies portrayed the main characteristics of the media system in Hong Kong in that period. First, as a corollary to the concept of "minimally integrated social political system," Kuan and Lau (1988) used the term "minimally integrated media political system" to describe the relationship between media and local politics in the period. Drawing upon Blumler and Gurevitch's (1975) analytical framework, Kuan and Lau pointed out the absence of direct government control of the press, the relative lack of top-level media practitioners or owners who also held political positions, and a generally weak structural linkage between the media and politics as major features of the media political system in Hong Kong at the time.

Second, in the early 1980s, Chan and Lee (1984, 1991) identified a party-press parallelism in the press system in Hong Kong. Newspapers exhibited a full range of ideological positions, ranging from far right to the far left. However, newspapers were not rightist or leftist with regard to local political matters. Rather, the main reference point was politics in China. Leftist papers were those supporting the communist regime in the mainland, while rightist papers were those supporting the Kuo Min Tang regime in Taiwan. In fact, some of these partisan papers were financially supported by the two regimes. All of them paid close attention to Chinese politics rather than to local issues. Ideological debates were allowed by the colonial government as long as such debates did not destabilize the local society.

Third, Chu and Lee (1995) conceptualized a public relations model of the press to describe the media-government interaction in and before the 1970s in Hong Kong. In such a model, the media publish only information positive to the political authorities. But rather than being propaganda machines, news organizations do not make up or distort facts to manipulate public opinion. The

government also does not have formal control of the media. The cordial media-government relationship is maintained through mutual cooperation.

Studies of government press management illustrated how this public relations model operated in colonial Hong Kong. In 1966 and 1967, urban riots partially related to the Chinese Cultural Revolution erupted in the city. After the riots, a commission report urged the government to develop "a greater consciousness of the need for public relations at all levels" (cited in Lee & Chan, 1990, p. 128). The Government Information Service (GIS), which was created by the colonial government to control the flow of political news, was restructured as a publicity agent. It became both a news producer and distributor, and had a monopoly on the flow of government information. It furnished the press with news releases and bulletins, organized press briefings, and established relationships with a specific group of journalists.

Nevertheless, the success of the GIS in managing the press could not be dissociated from the willing compliance of the latter. Hong Kong newspapers in the 1970s did not have substantial resources to spend on local news coverage. Hence they relied heavily on GIS materials, as Lee (1985) demonstrated in a content analysis of newspapers in 1980 and 1981. At the same time, journalists attending the GIS press briefings were willing to comply with the briefings' ground rules (e.g., rules about not quoting officials directly) as they did not want to risk not being invited the next time. Consequently, media coverage of government news was seldom critical. At most, leftist newspapers were more likely to "edit" GIS materials before publishing.

Overall, it is clear that "press freedom" developed in colonial Hong Kong not as the freedom to criticize the local government, but merely as the freedom to criticize the PRC and Taiwan governments. The situation began to change in the early 1970s. As Lui and Chiu (1999) argued, after the 1960s' urban riots, social movements began to play an important role in articulating popular demands toward the government. In response to rising popular demands and the need to facilitate economic growth, the colonial government also became more interventionist, including expanding its public housing project, providing public education and developing new towns. At the same time, a local identity of Hong Kong people developed (Ma, 1999; Mathews, 1997). The formation of such an identity was partly the result of changing demographics, as more and more people were born and grew up locally. Rapid economic development of the city also contributed to people's impression that they were vastly different from mainland Chinese. By the mid-1980s, Lau and Kuan (1988) found that the majority of their survey respondents would call themselves "Hong Kongese" when they were asked to identify themselves either as "Hong Kongese" or as "Chinese."

By the early 1980s, a distinctively local society had developed that was no longer minimally integrated with the political system. Parallel to such developments, the media's attention turned more and more toward local matters. They also began to play a more important role in facilitating communication between the government and the public (Chan, 1992).

The early 1980s also saw the beginning of the Sino-British negotiations on the future of Hong Kong. The signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 gave rise to a dual power structure in which Britain and China counter-balanced each other. As a result, the conditions were ripe for the media to abandon the public relations model in dealing with local matters. Increasingly, press criticism was directed at both the Chinese authorities and the Hong Kong government (Chu & Lee, 1995). As mentioned earlier, by the late 1980s, Hong Kong journalists also adopted the liberal conception of the press as their professional self-understanding, emphasizing professional autonomy and political independence (Chan et al., 1996).

As the result of a confluence of social and historical conditions in the 1980s, a more critical media slowly emerged. However, the role of the Hong Kong media in politics kept changing, as political developments in the transition period and after the eventual transfer of sovereignty continued to influence the formation of the media system.

Media's Role in Politics and Press Freedom Since the 1980s

Facing a legitimacy crisis and increasing popular demands, Britain decided to democratize the political system of Hong Kong in the early 1980s. Democratic elections were introduced into various representative bodies. In 1991, 18 of the 60 seats in the legislature were returned in the first direct elections of the LegCo. The number of directly elected seats was increased to 30 in 1995 following democratic reforms introduced by Hong Kong's last governor, Chris Patten.

However, electoral democratization was restricted by China. Besides being highly critical toward Patten's reform package, China successfully pressured the Hong Kong government to abandon the plan of direct elections of the legislature in 1988. At the same time, through drafting the Basic Law, the mini-constitution for post-handover Hong Kong, China had the power to set the rules of the game (Lo, 1998). The Chinese government insisted, as it still insists today, that democratization has to proceed in a gradual manner in accordance with the actual situation of the city. The number of directly elected legislators stands at 30 in 2008, and the earliest possible year for Hong Kong people to directly elect their chief executive will be 2017.

While institutional democratization has been agonizingly slow, democratization of the local political culture gathered pace since the early 1990s. Public support for democracy surged after Hong Kong people witnessed the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 (A. So, 1999). In a study conducted in 1992, Lau and Kuan (1995) found that the public paid close attention to public affairs through the media, even when compared with more democratically "advanced societies." Hong Kong people were also quite informed about political matters, as measured by their ability to name political leaders in China and around the world. Furthermore, political participation by the public increased over time. While the underdevelopment of democratic institutions in Hong Kong led to voting apathy

(Tse, 1995 ; Lo, 1999), Hong Kong people actually have been quite active in participating in rallies and protests (DeGolyer & Scott, 1996; Lam, 2004).

Years of political controversies have led to the formation of a vibrant political society in the city, which Kuan (1998, p. 1439) describes as "an independent arena mediating between the society at large and the polity." Due to a number of reasons, the mass media had a particularly important place in this new political society of the 1990s and after. First, as mentioned earlier, the Hong Kong media system has long been well-developed and sophisticated, and it has served as an important platform for local political communication since the 1970s. Citizens used the news media heavily (Lau & Kuan, 1995; Chan & Lee, 1992). Moreover, political parties at that time were fairly young and did not enjoy a high degree of trust among the general public when compared with the media (Lau, 1994, 1998). All these factors heightened the importance and influence of the media in political communication.

These considerations led Chan and So (2004) to conceptualize a surrogate democracy function of the media in Hong Kong. Through a survey, they found that citizens believed strongly in the media's functions to reflect public opinion, provide forums for public debates, promote communication between officials and citizens, criticize the government, make policy suggestions, and promote social reforms. Chan and So (2004) argued that, due to the lack of a full-fledged democracy, what happened in and through the media served as a surrogate for formal democratic institutions to articulate, communicate and channel the influence of public opinion. By playing such a role, the media also helped maintain social stability and alleviated the extended legitimacy crisis of the local political system.

Certainly, the media can fulfill its democratic functions satisfactorily only if they remain independent from the political power center. Before and after the transfer of sovereignty, one of the most prominent concerns about Hong Kong media, shared not only by researchers but also by local citizens and international observers, has been the future of press freedom. Inquiries into the condition of press freedom involve the analysis of a number of specific phenomena (e.g., media self-censorship) that will be discussed later. But at the structural level, China's influence on Hong Kong's media throughout the transition period is best analyzed through the notion of shifting journalistic paradigms.

In a book-length analysis on the Hong Kong press in the late 1980s, Chan and Lee (1991) defined a journalistic paradigm "as a set of taken-for-granted and unspoken assumptions, cognitive maps, or gestalt world views that inform the media as to what 'social facts' to report (and what not to report) and how to interpret them" (p. 23). Media following different journalistic paradigms, therefore, will come up with different versions of reality.

Shifts in journalistic paradigms were empirically illustrated by a series of content analyses. Theoretically, Chan and Lee (1991) identified two processes at the time affecting press performance and contributing to shifts in journalistic paradigms: a "politics of cooptation" through which the power center attempted

to bring the outsiders' views in line with its own positions and a "politics of accommodation" through which the media maximized profits and minimized risks by reckoning with the authority of the power center.

Cooptation and accommodation proceeded in a number of ways. One way was through changes in media ownership. Since the 1980s and early 1990s, Chinese capital was entering Hong Kong's media scene. At the same time, international investors were also interested in buying Hong Kong's media outlets in order to set up a base to enter the lucrative Chinese media market. With their business interests at stake, these investors were unwilling to offend China. Fung and Lee (1994) argued that this change in ownership structure has led to depoliticization of media content and journalists' apprehension about criticizing China.

No matter how much impact ownership structure has on media practices, Hong Kong's press structure itself has changed over the years as journalistic paradigms shifted. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the restructuring and partial demise of party-press parallelism in Hong Kong. More specifically, rightist papers either found it impossible to survive in Hong Kong's highly competitive media market in the 1990s or were forced to move toward a more centrist stance on political matters (i.e., less one-sidedly critical of mainland China). As a result, the left-right distinction had become largely obsolete by the mid-1990s.

Instead, C. So (1999) suggested that a pro-China vs. pro-Hong Kong continuum would serve as a better basis for classification of news media in the mid-1990s. Because of the re-emergence of market-oriented journalism in the late 1990s, Lee (2000) suggested a tripartite characterization of the press structure in Hong Kong, constituted by the leftist papers, the centrist elite-oriented information press, and the market-oriented story press.

This tripartite characterization was a useful shorthand in describing the press structure in Hong Kong at the time. But what actually existed, and continues to exist today, is a complex interplay between political and economic forces on the Hong Kong media. Different from the case of the United States as analyzed by Underwood (1993) and McManus (1994), market-oriented news media in Hong Kong did not necessarily depoliticize their content. Instead, as Lee (2000) suggested, the commercial nature of the Hong Kong media system requires that media organizations have to concern themselves not only with political pressures but also with their own credibility in the media market. As a result, market-oriented journalism can indeed be the most politically daring and critical journalism in Hong Kong, exemplified by the *Apple Daily*'s political coverage in the past few years (Lee, 2007a; Leung, 2006).

It is questionable whether the tripartite press structure is still a helpful description of the Hong Kong press structure a decade after the handover. For example, the differences between the political coverage of the *Apple Daily* and the *Oriental Daily*, two popular local papers, are so large that grouping them together as market-oriented papers might conceal more than reveal. The same could also be said regarding the *Ming Pao* and the *Sing Tao Daily*, two elite-

oriented papers which arguably have visibly different levels of affiliation with the power center. Consequently, the tripartite structure probably has to be broken down into two separate dimensions: political inclination and types of target audience. This forms a three-by-two typology and logically six types of media: mass-conservative, elite-conservative, mass-centrist, elite-centrist, mass-critical, and elite-critical. The extent to which these six cells are actually occupied in Hong Kong constitutes a meaningful representation of the political contour of its press system.

In sum, because of the condition of political transition, an important body of political communication research in Hong Kong has focused on macro-level changes in the city's media system. The literature informs us about how changes in media systems and the condition of press freedom were closely related to changes in the distribution of social and political power in the society. Part of this research has used conventional social scientific techniques, most notably content analyses and surveys, to generate data that support the arguments being made. But the overall concern remained historical and institutional, and some of the writings were based almost entirely on the researchers' close observations of the local media scene. Even when social scientific methods were adopted, the purpose was often not the disentangling of causal relationships. The aim was more similar to what anthropologists would call a "thick description" (i.e., a description that pinpoints the social import of specific phenomena; see Geertz, 2000) of the relationship between media and politics in the city.

For the international research community, this body of work should provide a very good reference point for comparison with other transitional societies. Issues such as the impact of market forces on the media in times of political change, the relationship between democratization and the media system, shifts in journalistic paradigms and the politics of accommodation, should have broad and general relevance.

Media and Public Opinion in the Process of Democratization

Much political communication research in democratic countries has focused on media effects on public opinion, mediated election campaigns, and media as a public sphere for deliberation (see Bennett & Entman, 2000). Before the 1970s, studies on these topics would have been less relevant to the Hong Kong society. As discussed earlier, elections were not institutionalized at that time (with the exception of some local level consultative bodies), and the media served more as public relations agencies for the government than as platforms for political debates.

Democratization since the 1980s changed the situation and made the research agenda in democratic countries much more relevant to Hong Kong. Seizing upon the opportunities, researchers have conducted a range of empirical studies on the relationship between media, political institutions, and public opinion.

Media Effects on Public Opinion

Research on public opinion in Hong Kong has a relatively short history. As Li and Leung (2001) pointed out, survey research in Hong Kong began in the 1960s, but researchers at that time faced serious resource constraints. Survey research flourished only in the 1980s when the academic community was better developed and research funding became more available. Into the 1990s, surveys became an important part of local social studies, and political opinion polls became very prominent in the public arena.

Coupled with changes in the larger political contexts as discussed above, studies of media effects on public opinion gained a foothold in communication research in Hong Kong only in the early 1990s. A number of important studies have been conducted since then. Concerned with the issue of political trust, Wilkins and Bates (1995), for example, reported a negative association between television exposure and distrust towards the Chinese government. In another article, Wilkins (1995) reported that news exposure was negatively related to political cynicism among men but not women. As a consequence, the author argued that media effects on political cynicism, a hotly debated issue in the United States in the 1990s (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), did not exist in Hong Kong during the transition period.

K. Chan (1999) examined the agenda-setting hypothesis with regard to environmental issues in Hong Kong. She compared media coverage on environmental issues from 1983 to 1995 with opinion poll data on citizens' agenda over time. The findings support the agenda-setting hypothesis only between 1983 and 1988, when the issues first gained media attention, but not between 1989 and 1995, when the issues were covered more heavily and the members of public had already made up their minds about the importance of the issues.

Willnat and Zhu (1996) investigated the priming hypothesis and tested it with regard to the political reform package of Governor Chris Patten. The amount of media coverage of the reform was found to be positively associated with Patten's ratings. The results supported the priming hypothesis, as the amount of media coverage about the political reform was related to the strength of the association between people's satisfaction with the policies and their overall evaluation of Patten.

Willnat (1995) tested the spiral of silence hypothesis in another survey-based study. Through two surveys conducted in 1993 and 1995 respectively about the issues of the Sino-British negotiations and the 1995 LegCo elections, he found that willingness to express one's opinions was related to perception of majority opinion. The relationship, however, held mainly among citizens who did not regard the issues as important. In a similar study focusing on Patten's reform proposal, Willnat (1996) found a typical third-person effect, as survey respondents regarded media coverage of Patten's reform as having more impact on other people's opinions than on their own opinions.

The same study also shows the typical finding in spiral of silence studies:

Perceptions of the congruence between people's own opinions and the larger social atmosphere predicted people's willingness to express opinions at a hypothetical dinner party (but not on radio shows). Most interesting, though, was a linkage between the third-person effect and the spiral of silence phenomenon. Among the better educated and those who regarded the reform as an important issue, those who perceived a high degree of incongruence between one's opinion and the opinion climate exhibited a stronger third-person effect. Willnat (1996) attributed the result to the hostile media phenomenon—that people tend to see the media as biased against the position they hold (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). As people perceived a media bias against themselves, and regarded the media as having a huge influence on others, they came to perceive a lower level of congruence between their own opinions and others' opinions.

From these studies, we can see that researchers have tried to test several well-known political communication theories and hypotheses in Hong Kong. In some cases, the studies came up with interesting extensions of the original hypotheses. However, as far as the media effects literature is concerned, there are still theories and hypotheses that have not been tested in Hong Kong, such as framing effects and cultivation analysis.

Overall, the studies discussed here indicate that media in Hong Kong do have an important effect on the formation of public opinion. Yet a major limitation of this body of research is the lack of integration between a concern with media effects in general and considerations of the special context of Hong Kong in particular. Most of them can be considered as generalizability studies, which mainly aim at testing theories and hypotheses developed elsewhere (Wirth & Kolb, 2004, p. 90). Although their value should not be dismissed, there has been a lack of in-depth discussions of why certain media effects upheld in Hong Kong while others might not. There has also been a lack of considerations of why certain types of media effects but not others should be regarded as particularly important for Hong Kong society. If these two issues are addressed, studies that investigate the effects of the media on public opinion in Hong Kong will be able to make even more substantive contributions to both local and international political communication research.

Media Effects and Performance in Elections

The development of electoral politics in Hong Kong since the 1980s has also given rise to studies on media in elections. The media's objectivity and role in public service have been the most prominent concerns among local researchers. To (1995) examined the LegCo elections in 1991 and found that television news largely succeeded in maintaining balance and fairness among the candidates. Yet he also criticized television as having failed to provide a public service, as news stories often fell short of providing relevant and substantive issue information and analysis for voters. Nip and To's (1999) study of television coverage of the 1998 LegCo elections arrived at basically the same conclusion.

However, neutrality did not necessarily exist in press coverage of elections in the 1990s. C. So's (1999) content analysis, for example, found that newspaper biases existed in the 1998 LegCo elections. Classifying the newspapers he examined as either pro-China, pro-Hong Kong, or centrist, he found that biases varied systematically with political orientations.

Regarding media effects in elections, some researchers have focused on whether media would contribute to voting participation in Hong Kong. Some studies found that media use positively relates to political knowledge about elections and the candidates (Chan, 1993; F. Lee, 1999; Guo, 2000). More importantly, Guo (2000) found that attention to election news on television and newspaper was positively associated with intention to vote during the prelude to the 1998 LegCo elections. Cheung, Chan, and Leung (2000), by analyzing three panel surveys conducted during two different elections in 1994 and 1995, also showed a similar positive relationship between exposure to election news and self-reported voting behavior.

However, the mobilizing effect of media in elections cannot be taken for granted. Studying the 1998 LegCo elections, F. Lee (1999) found that attention to news media was not positively related to turnout. When political knowledge was controlled, news media attention even had a negative relationship with turnout, especially among voters with lower levels of political sophistication. He suggested that media's negative effect on voter turnout might be explained by horse-race coverage of election. Lo and Yu (1999) have also observed that the news media did treat the 1998 elections largely as a horse race event, though there has been a lack of systematic content analyses addressing this issue.

What is conspicuously lacking in election studies conducted in Hong Kong is research on how the media might influence vote choice. This lack of research probably reflects the research community's underlying concern of democratic development. That is, given the partial development of democratic institutions in Hong Kong during the past two decades, researchers may regard the development of political participation (and thus the media's impact on it) as more important than other aspects of voting.

Hong Kong researchers also know very well that election studies in the United States have long abandoned the rather simple-minded search for direct persuasive media effects on voter choices. Nevertheless, rather than direct persuasion, the Hong Kong media might have some effects on how voters make up their minds. Kuan and Lau's (2002) study of the 1998 LegCo elections found that voters with lower levels of information based their vote choice largely upon their own political party support. Even though Kuan and Lau (2002) did not examine media exposure in particular, their findings suggest that the news media, through providing information to the public, may change the criteria upon which voters make their choices. Developing this area of research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the media's role and impact in Hong Kong elections.

Media and Political Parties

Democratization entails the development of new political institutions. Local political parties have a short history in Hong Kong. Despite the rise of social movements and pressure groups in earlier decades, the first full-fledged political party—the United Democrats of Hong Kong (UDHK)—was formed only in 1990 (Louie, 1991). The UDHK won a landslide victory in the 1991 LegCo election, forcing other politicians to accept the inevitability of pooling resources together in the form of parties (see Lau & Louie, 1993). A number of new parties were formed in subsequent years. By the mid-1990s, a multiparty system had already become part of the political reality in Hong Kong (Leung, 1997).

Some researchers were interested in media's role in facilitating the development of party politics in Hong Kong. Based on the idea of status conferral originally formulated by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948), Fung (1995) argued that media in Hong Kong helped legitimize political parties as an integral part of the local political system. Analyzing newspapers' political coverage, Fung (1995) found that, since the late 1980s, the Hong Kong media have increasingly used political groups in the city as news sources. This implicitly gave political groups the status of being legitimate spokespersons on political matters. The media also helped publicize the "brand-names" of political parties and produce charismatic party leaders. Moreover, party activities and competition were treated as normal aspects of local politics. Into the mid-1990s, media coverage of political parties was fully integrated into the news routine.

This argument of the media's role in legitimating party politics was consistent with the survey findings that Chan (1993) obtained during the 1991 LegCo election. He found that media use was positively related to knowledge about political parties. More significantly, television news exposure was related positively to attitudes toward a full range of political parties.

It should be noted that the portrayal of a positive relationship between party development and the media is more typical of democratizing societies. For example, discussing Hungary's democratic transition, Sukosd (2000, pp. 144–145) pointed out the media's role in facilitating the development of civic groups and parties. But researchers in developed democracies often lament the negative effect of the media on political parties. For example, according to Wattenberg (1991, 1998), with the advance of modern media, politicians in the United States have become less dependent on the party machine to communicate with voters. At the same time, the media, especially television, have the tendency to focus on individuals and images. Consequently, media politics is regarded as leading to the rise of candidate-centered politics and the decline of party politics.

Taking Wattenberg's argument into account, researchers may actually raise the question of whether the Hong Kong media will constrain further developments of local political parties. This is not to deny the findings by Fung (1995) and Chan (1993). Rather, the point is that, while the Hong Kong media might have facilitated the growth of political parties in the early 1990s, the continuing

reliance of political parties on the media might affect their ability to develop their party machines and supporter networks. It is clear, however, that more studies on the relationship between the Hong Kong media and political parties (and civic groups in general) are needed to go beyond the ideas of legitimization and status conferral.

Political Discourse and Public Opinion in the Media

Democratization in Hong Kong has been a struggle between supporters of democracy and supporters of China. A key aspect of this struggle has been the construction and contest of various political discourses. As a result, the analysis of public discourse has become an important focus of political communication research in the city. Among the most interesting studies are those focusing on the construction of and contestation between the democratic and anti-democratic discourses.

Several representative studies have provided insights about the elements of the anti-democratic discourses. Flowerdew's (1997) analysis of political discourse on the eve of the handover found that the pro-China faction has constructed a Confucianist discourse emphasizing social harmony, stability, and traditional values. Ku (2001a), on the other hand, identified a hegemonic narrative of communal success in Hong Kong before the handover. Emphasizing the transformation of Hong Kong from a small fishing village to a metropolitan city at the end of the 20th century, this narrative explains Hong Kong's economic success in terms of the a-political character of its people in the 1970s and 1980s. By implication, if Hong Kong is to continue its economic success, Hong Kong people should focus on economic matters and not try too hard to push for democratization.

Another set of case studies conducted by Ku (2001b, 2004, 2007) have pinpointed an emphasis on law and order as another main theme in local public discourse which constrains media representations of civil rights struggles. Similarly, an analysis of media construction of the electoral victory of an anti-government activist also points to how the deep lying cultural code of stability, order, and practicality has constrained the articulation and expression of anti-establishment views in the media (Lee, 2006a).

On the other side, democratization has also changed the principles governing public discourses in general. As Ku (1998, 1999) demonstrated, government officials, the media, political groups, and others all have to engage in what she labeled a "politics of public credibility." She contended that politics in the public sphere in the late 1990s in Hong Kong entailed a need to make reference to a symbolic public. Politicians and officials, visible to the public via the media, had to justify their opinions and ideas in terms of consistency with the opinions or the interests of the public at large. In one sense, this means that public discourse in Hong Kong has become similar to public discourse in other democratic countries, where public opinion and public interests are the ultimate reference points. The special characteristic of Hong Kong, however, is that democratic institutions

have not been fully developed. Hong Kong citizens do not have formal institutional means to remove government leaders from their offices. Nevertheless, even these officials have to largely play by the rules of publicity.

In this new discursive politics of public opinion, means to construct symbolic representations of public opinion are highly important. It is therefore not surprising to see the rising prominence of opinion polling since the early 1990s in Hong Kong. In a study of polls taken in Hong Kong after the handover, however, Lee (2002a) found that news coverage focused almost exclusively on recent rises and falls of popularity ratings. At the same time, such rises and falls were explained mainly as citizens' ephemeral and emotional reactions to economic situations and current events. As a result, though negative poll ratings did put the administration under pressure, the question of changes in political system was almost never raised in the coverage of the poll findings. Moreover, a more recent study has found that newspapers following different journalistic paradigms would cover the popularity opinion polls differently (Lee, 2006b). Such studies imply that the impact of poll results on politicians and public opinions would be largely dependent on how they are communicated in the media.

Other than opinion polling, an important phenomenon noticed by local commentators that has yet to receive much research attention is the changing meanings and practices of government public relations (but see B. K. Lee, 2007). It is interesting to note that public discourse surrounding government public relations—whether they are insincere shows or necessary means of government-citizen communication—has changed in the past decade. Since the Hong Kong press abandoned the public relations model of the 1970s, government publicity efforts also needed to be reorganized. Studies of these new government public relation practices and how the media reacted to such practices are needed if we have to better understand how representations of public opinions are created, communicated, and contested in the public sphere in Hong Kong.

In sum, political communication studies in Hong Kong in the past 20 years have contributed to our understanding of the effects and functions of the media in the city's process of democratization, as well as how public opinion and democratization itself are contested through political discourses. While some of the findings in these studies are more or less similar to the findings in Western democracies, others are more illustrative of Hong Kong as a democratizing society or a partial democracy.

Other than the gaps in the research areas discussed in the previous sections, there might be topics that simply have not been addressed at all. For example, experiences in other democratic societies have demonstrated the media's role in promoting public acceptance of democratic values and norms (Gunther, Montero, & Wert, 2000; Sukosd, 2000; Tironi & Sunkel, 2000). However, the question whether the Hong Kong media have played a role in the democratic socialization of the local public has not been addressed in any study to date. Another topic that has received almost no research attention is political advertising. This lack of research can be understood by the fact that election campaigns in Hong Kong

still rely much more on interpersonal communications and other "old media" (such as leaflets and banners) rather than the modern mass media: Television political ads are simply banned, while print ads are relatively less utilized. Nevertheless, relevant search will certainly be needed in the future as media political advertising is expected to grow in prominence in the city (Willnat & Aw, 2006).

More broadly speaking, new developments in local politics continue to suggest new topics for research. For instance, one of the most significant developments in Hong Kong politics in recent years has been the emergence of large-scale pro-democracy demonstrations. On July 1, 2003, 500,000 Hong Kong citizens marched in the street to protest against the then-imminent national security legislation. The demonstration triggered a series of political events leading to the eventual postponement of the legislation. Then, between January 1, 2004, and July 1, 2006, five other large-scale demonstrations were conducted. Between 20,000 and 200,000 citizens joined each of these demonstrations calling for quickening the pace of democratization.

These events led to concerns about the media's role and effect on the formation of large-scale public rallies in Hong Kong. The problem of media effects was politicized when the Chinese government claimed that certain media outlets in Hong Kong have successfully mobilized their audiences and readers to protest. Drawing upon a range of onsite surveys, population surveys, and media content analysis, J. Chan and F. Lee have recently published a number of articles on the media-movement-public dynamics in the current wave of pro-democracy demonstrations (Chan, 2005; Chan & Lee, 2005, 2006, 2007, forthcoming; Lee, 2006c; Lee & Chan, forthcoming). In short, the body of research argued that the media had an important facilitating role in the formation of the current reinvigorated pro-democracy movement by setting the agenda, providing action-facilitating information to the public, and serving as a messenger and amplifying the calls to actions issued by social leaders and organizations. The success of the demonstrations led to heightened levels of collective efficacy among the public. At the same time, the energized public opinion expressed through collective actions also influenced media behavior and discourses.

Press Freedom in the Process of Power Transfer

Despite democratization, the Hong Kong media have operated under intense political pressures created by the transfer of power to the Chinese government. For media researchers, an important question was whether press freedom could be maintained. This gave rise to a range of studies on changes in journalistic paradigms in Hong Kong, as discussed earlier.

Empirical studies on shifting journalistic paradigms throughout the 1980s and 1990s were mainly case studies of news coverage on specific issues and events (see So & Chan, 1999). For example, W. Lee (1999) studied newspaper coverage of Governor Chris Patten's political reform from 1992 to 1994. She found

that the centrist papers were reluctant to support the reform package, while the rightist papers also bent a little on their stance, despite an overall sympathetic attitude. In another study, Fung (1998) found that news coverage of the 1995 LegCo elections demonstrated a general bias against the democrats. Both studies complement Chan and Lee's (1984, 1991) findings discussed earlier. Later studies of press freedom in Hong Kong, however, broadened beyond the case studies approach and the concept of a journalistic paradigm.

Analysis of Media Self-Censorship

In the 1980s, the Chinese government promised that Hong Kong would be governed under the principle of "one country, two systems" after the handover in 1997. As promised, China did not openly intervened in Hong Kong's affairs until 2003 and 2004 (as discussed later). In fact, by the early 1990s, it became clear that the major threat to press freedom in Hong Kong would not come from direct censorship. As it turned out, the main threat came from the practices of self-censorship among media organizations and journalists.

Lee (1998) defined self-censorship "as a set of editorial actions ranging from omission, dilution, distortion, change of emphasis, to choice of rhetorical devices by journalists, their organizations, and even the entire media community in anticipation of currying reward and avoiding punishments from the power structure" (p. 57). Over the years, various analyses of self-censorship have tried to identify how Chinese leaders defined the norms of political correctness for the Hong Kong media. Chinese leaders clearly stated that advocacy for two Chinas or Tibet independence would not be allowed; nor would personal attacks on Chinese leaders (Lee & Chu, 1998). Lau and To (2002) reported that Chinese leaders indeed try to exert influence on these two issues through speeches and occasional criticisms of the Hong Kong press.

Cheung (2003a, 2003b) pointed out that Chinese leaders have used the strategy of ambiguity to induce self-censorship in the Hong Kong media. An example was the jailing of Hong Kong reporter Xi Yang by China in 1994 for stealing state secrets, which were, in fact, merely financial information about interest rate changes of China's National Bank. The Hong Kong media pushed the Chinese government to define the term "state secrets" but never got a clear response (Chan & To, 1999; Scuitto, 1996). Another example was the insistence of Chinese leaders that it would be unacceptable for the Hong Kong media to advocate Taiwan independence. As before, the difference between advocacy and objective reporting was never made clear by the Chinese leaders (Lee & Chu, 1998). Since the line between acceptable and unacceptable media coverage of China was kept ambiguous, the Hong Kong media were left guessing, and self-censorship ensued whenever the media felt it had to play safe.

Self-censorship is particularly dangerous to press freedom because it is elusive. For media researchers, it also means that self-censorship is not easy to document beyond anecdotal evidence (see Lam, 2003). Reporting on a survey conducted

in 1996, Lee (1998) showed that Hong Kong journalists in general regarded the media as apprehensive when criticizing the Chinese government, though the extent of such recognition differed according to the type of newspapers the journalists were working for. A survey conducted among Hong Kong journalists in 2001 found that more than half of them recognized the existence of self-censorship in Hong Kong but did not view it as a serious problem, while 13% regarded self-censorship as serious. The figures rose in another journalist survey in 2006, as nearly 30% of journalists viewed self-censorship as serious (So & Chan, 2007).

Another way to document self-censorship is to compare Hong Kong media's coverage with international media's coverage of the same events. Cheung (2003a) investigated how the *New York Times*, the *China Times* of Taiwan, and four Hong Kong newspapers covered the tension between mainland China and Taiwan in summer 1999. She found that none of the Hong Kong newspapers "appeared to have conducted any interviews with the Taipei authorities or anyone who might have sympathy with Taiwan" (p. 215). Hong Kong newspapers also did not provide any serious discussions about whether Taiwan was really an independent state.

Of course, content analyses and surveys of journalists cannot tell us how self-censorship actually works in the newsroom. Indeed, one area of underdeveloped research in Hong Kong's media studies is ethnography or in-depth interview based research addressing how news is actually produced through organizational routines, editorial policies, and the interactions between journalists and sources. Some recent studies have just started to rectify this weakness of the literature and provided insights about the micro-mechanisms through which political pressure leads to apprehensive coverage by the media (Ma, 2007; Lee & Chan, forthcoming; Lai, 2007). Hopefully more studies of this kind will be produced so that a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of self-censorship can be obtained.

Media Strategies and Practices in Handling Political Pressure

While studies of self-censorship have portrayed a bleak scenario, it is noteworthy that many assessments of press freedom in Hong Kong in the first few years after the handover have been largely positive (e.g., Y. Chan, 1999; Lau & To, 2003; Holbig, 2003). Part of the reason is that, as mentioned above, the Chinese government did not intervene openly and directly into Hong Kong affairs until 2003 and 2004. Self-censorship applied mainly to a few sensitive issues (e.g., the Taiwan question), while the Hong Kong media have been left largely free to criticize the SAR government on local matters. In fact, K. Leung's (1999) analysis of newspaper editorials in 1998 argues that the Hong Kong media had a tendency to focus on local matters after the handover.

In addition, not all journalists and media organizations succumbed to political pressure. Due to concerns with credibility and professionalism, the Hong Kong media devised strategies and practices that can both handle the political

pressure they face and preserve their own integrity. Some researchers have documented and analyzed these strategies and practices.

Lee (2000), for example, identified three such strategies that have appeared since the handover in 1997. The first is juxtaposition, as editors became more inclined to publish articles supporting the Hong Kong or Chinese governments alongside articles propounding the opposite view. The second is editorial division of labor. Editorials became more timid as many news outlets attempted to avoid direct confrontations with the power center. Yet, in the name of providing a marketplace of ideas, news organizations continued to keep their column pages open to a diverse range of viewpoints. Many popular columns on newspapers thus remained lively and highly critical of China. Third, news media also adopted certain narrative forms to dodge political pressures. For example, political news stories were written in highly factual, plain manner. Criticisms of the Chinese government, when expressed, were mainly couched in collective terms rather than focusing on individual political leaders. Critical views were also embedded within conditional statements to reduce sensitivity.

Most of the strategies identified by Lee (2000) are justified in terms of objectivity and neutrality. This is what makes the strategies different from mere self-censorship, as they are grounded in the professional norms of journalists. In fact, according to Lee, Chan, and So (2004), some news organizations in Hong Kong have adopted a strategy of intensified objectivity in handling political news. This strategy encompasses phenomena such as a heightened concern with balancing news sources, a shift towards the use of news sources regarded as being impartial on political matters (such as academics), the use of polls as scientific indicators of public opinions, the disappearance of predilections in covering elections, and the reliance on alternative media outlets for critical views.

The relative lack of ethnographic studies of newsrooms means that the above-mentioned strategies and practices were mostly traced from news contents by researchers. For example, Lee and Lin (2006) analyze the editorials published by two Hong Kong Chinese newspapers during the political reform debate in early 2004. They identified a range of rhetorical strategies adopted by the two media organizations to handle both political pressure and their own market credibility. Most notably, as a manifestation of the approach of intensified objectivity, the elite-oriented *Ming Pao* was found to adopt the rhetoric of objectivity and rationality and posited itself as a neutral commentator in the debate. The text-based approach, however, has certainly constrained the range of research findings, although we should not underestimate their value in broadening our understanding of the politics of press freedom by showing how freedom is contested by media organizations and journalists.

Alternative Media: Internet and Talk Radio

An important topic for communication research on authoritarian political systems is the power of alternative media (Couldry & Curran, 2003). When the

mainstream media are under heavy control, alternative media might be able to help sustain an oppositional public sphere so that critical voices can be communicated (e.g., Jakubowicz, 1991). Given the political pressure on the Hong Kong media, some local researchers thus paid attention to the roles and functions of such alternative media outlets.

One possible alternative medium in Hong Kong is the Internet. After all, Hong Kong has one of the highest Internet penetration rates in Asia, with about 60% of the population online (by the mid-2000s) according to government statistics. The new medium has also been largely free from government regulation. The political potential of the Internet was demonstrated by a recent study by Chan, Chung, and Lee (2004), which focused on the Internet as a means for citizens to mobilize their existing social capital for political participation. Examining the case of the July 1, 2003 demonstration, they found that Internet use was systematically related to people's mode of participation in the rally. More specifically, people who used the Internet to share political information with others were more likely to have participated in the rally with their friends. They were also more likely to acknowledge the influence of friends and public figures on their decision to join the rally.

However, considering the Internet as a space for oppositional discourse, Fung's (2002) study of an online chat room hosted by a local newspaper ended with a pessimistic conclusion. Through in-depth interviews and observations of the chat room discussions, the author found that the chat room was infiltrated by a small group of "professional writers" who mostly propounded the official view. The identity of the writers and how they were organized were unclear. Fung's findings suggest that the internet is not free from the intrusion of political power, a point now widely recognized by researchers around the world (e.g., Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2004).

The limitation of the Internet does not stem only from the inevitable intrusion of political and economic power. The disjointed nature of many online debates and the lack of influence of online discussions on mainstream public discourse are probably more fundamental limitations of internet discourses. Hence, probably the most prominent alternative medium in Hong Kong since the mid-1990s has been political talk radio. As politically significant infotainment, political talk radio existed in Hong Kong for many decades but became popular only in the last few years before the handover. In a survey conducted in 1998, Lee (2002a) showed that talk radio listening was negatively related with respondents' level of education and attitudes toward the government. At the same time, talk radio listening was positively associated with respondents' political knowledge, even after other demographics were controlled. A more recent survey conducted in 2004 showed that talk radio listening constituted an opinion activity in that it was systematically tied to various forms of opinion expressions in other settings. More specifically, talk radio listening is positively related to degree of opinionation, willingness to express a minority opinion, and political participation (Lee, 2007b). In other words, there are evidences showing that talk radio has contrib-

uted to the formation of a more talkative political culture in Hong Kong (see Lee, 2005, for a study of political discussion in Hong Kong).

In contrast to the United States, where mainstream journalists generally think that talk radio provides only trash talk (Cappella, Turow, & Jamieson, 1996; Carey, 1993), Hong Kong journalists hold talk radio in high regard. As Lee, Chan, and So (2003) argued, through allowing citizens to express their discontent, and sometimes even directly criticizing government officials who join the shows, talk radio provided journalists with valuable "news events" to report. The reliance on talk radio for critical views from the public has been another strategy that journalists in Hong Kong used to handle political pressure, while the coverage of talk radio served to further enhance the prominence of the programs in the public arena.

Indeed, talk radio has become a symbol of press freedom in the city. In August 2004, Commercial Radio, which hosts the most prominent phone-in talk shows in Hong Kong, decided to end its contract with A. Cheng, the most popular talk show host in the city who was famous for his political criticisms. The event raised serious public concern regarding freedom of speech in the city. As Lee (2007a) explicates, the demise of critical talk shows since 2004 represented a major loss in the vibrancy of the city's marketplace of ideas.

Citizens' Support for Press Freedom and Evaluation of Media

Since the mid-1990s, opinion polls have recorded a decline in trust in the mass media among the Hong Kong people. The major reason behind this decline is not so much political as the result of the rise of sensational journalism and other unethical news practices (So, 1997; Lau & To, 2002). For instance, in 1999, the Hong Kong government proposed to establish an official Press Council to monitor media ethics. Journalists strongly opposed the proposal, fearing that it would open up a channel for press censorship. Yet opinion polls at the time showed that the majority of citizens actually supported the government proposal, illustrating how deeply dissatisfied citizens were with the media's ethics. Although media organizations succeeded in forcing the government to modify its original proposal (an independent press council was established instead), the media clearly understood that a lack of ethics could hurt them politically.

Against this background, studying citizens' attitudes toward the media has been another important area of research in Hong Kong. Martin, Wilson, and Cheng (1994) reported a study conducted in the early 1990s about citizens' attitudes towards press freedom. They found that, when press freedom was considered in abstract terms, Hong Kong citizens were very willing to recognize its importance. When citizens were asked if they would support media's rights with regard to specific practices, they also strongly supported media's rights in criticizing political leaders and the military. However, citizens were found to desire limiting protection on the things they disagreed with or found offensive, such as reporting the names of juveniles charged with crimes.

Despite being generally supportive of press freedom, Hong Kong people perceive the role of the media differently than journalists. Comparing a 2001 survey of Hong Kong journalists with a 2002 survey of Hong Kong citizens, where both contained the same set of questions, Lee, Chan, and So (2003) found that citizens emphasized the media's constructive functions (such as providing policy suggestions and facilitating communications between citizens and government) more than the journalists. Journalists, on the other hand, emphasized the media's watchdog function more than citizens did. In a similar analysis of the 2002 citizen survey, Lee, Chan, and So (2005) found that citizens with higher levels of education were more likely to support media criticisms of the government, while citizens with lower levels of education emphasized media's constructive functions. Moreover, better educated citizens tended to dissociate their evaluations of the government and the media more than those with lower levels of education. According to the researchers, this shows that better educated citizens were more receptive to the idea of media independence from political power.

As Lee, Chan, and So (2005) pointed out, studying citizens' attitudes toward the media is a way to bring together the idea of a democratized political culture and the concern of press freedom. To the extent that Hong Kong has developed a democratic civic culture, public attitudes toward the press would serve as another force counteracting the pressure from the political power center. Similarly, studying citizens' attitudes towards the media can also allow researchers to evaluate the utility of the various strategies developed by the media to handle political pressure. As discussed earlier, some media organizations have intensified their objective approach to news in order to meet political pressure. Yet the gesture of objectivity may, in specific occasions, only become an excuse for the media not to criticize the power holders. A recent study by F. Lee (2007c) shows that common citizens indeed recognize this problematic aspect of objective journalism. On issues that involve conflicts between Hong Kong and China, citizens who believe that the media should uphold Hong Kong interests instead of taking the neutral position tend to regard self-censorship as a more serious problem. This finding shows that at least some citizens would feel dissatisfied about the media's gesture of neutrality on specific political issues.

Taken together, the political communication studies conducted in Hong Kong make an important and unique contribution to the global research community. As a liberal but limited democracy under an authoritarian sovereign, Hong Kong has been a place where press freedom and politics interact in intriguing and complicated ways. In discussing historical and institutional analyses of the Hong Kong media, we pointed out that the configuration of the press system and the condition of press freedom in Hong Kong were closely related to the distribution of social and political power. However, the studies discussed above reveal that there were numerous factors mediating the influence of social and political power on the media. Press freedom did not simply increase or decrease due to the existence of political pressure. Rather, the politics of press freedom

involved a strategic contest in which the government and the media both devised different strategies for their own purposes. It also involved the development of alternative media and their uses on the citizens' and mainstream media's part. Finally, developments in the political culture and citizens' evaluation of media performance can also influence the condition of press freedom in Hong Kong.

Similar to democratization, the process of power transfer in Hong Kong is ongoing. New developments will continue to generate new research problems. One important recent development has been the Chinese government's direct intervention into Hong Kong affairs. After public resistance forced the SAR government to step back on national security legislation in 2003, the Chinese government decided to take the leading role in early 2004 when the debate about electoral reform began. In April 2004, the National People's Congress interpreted the Basic Law and then dismissed the possibility of popular election of the Hong Kong's chief executive in 2007. If China's active intervention in Hong Kong affairs continues, the Hong Kong media will be under even more severe political pressure.

An important research topic suggested by this new development is the relationship between media and national identity. Hong Kong people's national identification has been ostensibly on the rise since the handover (Lee & Chan, 2005), yet important cultural differences between the two places persist. In the debates about national security legislation and democratic reform, the Chinese government has questioned Hong Kong people's patriotism. It resulted in a discursive struggle about the proper meanings of patriotism in Hong Kong, and the relationship between Hong Kong people's local and national identities (see Yip, 2003; *Ming Pao*, 2004).

The role of the popular media in shaping the cultural identities of Hong Kong people has long been a hot research topic among cultural studies scholars and political scientists in Hong Kong (e.g., Ma, 1999; Abbas, 1997). Nevertheless, no empirical study to date has specifically addressed the role of the news media in developing, sustaining, or constraining local and national identities after the handover in 1997 (but see general discussions and overview by Ma & Fung, 2007; Mathews, Ma, & Lui, 2007). Because of its colonial history, national identities and nationalism may not be terminologies that Hong Kong people are familiar and comfortable with. But political integration cannot be dissociated from cultural integration. Therefore, media and national identity should be an important topic for political communication research in the city.

Conclusions

In Hong Kong, where the political scene is being reconfigured continuously, the context of political communication has been in a state of flux. Ten years after its return to China, the Hong Kong government has been experimenting with a cabinet system, trying to accommodate the fallout of the huge demonstration on

July 1, 2003, experiencing a change in leadership which signifies a more modern and technocratic approach to governance. The pro-democracy movement was reinvigorated, and a controversial debate on electoral reform was conducted, but the issues of democratization have not completely been settled. In March 2007, Hong Kong had its first televised candidate debate for the Chief Executive election, even though the election did not involve a popular vote. Many commentators opined that it would have a profound impact on the culture of political communication in the city.

In any case, unlike in Western nations, where the social context remains relatively stable, contextual change is of fundamental importance in Hong Kong. Any change in the socio-political structure will have immense implications for the politics of public opinion in the city.

As a result, an important problem for political communication researchers in Hong Kong in the past two decades has been a historical understanding of the changes in the contexts for political communication. Compared with political communication scholars in the West, especially the United States, scholars in Hong Kong have spent much more effort on structural and institutional analysis. Only with a good grasp of the structural and institutional changes can researchers identify the significance of empirical phenomena. Hence, to be socially and theoretically relevant, especially to transitional societies where important structural changes are taking place, students of political communication in Hong Kong should continue to build on the strength of the structural and institutional approach. It remains to be seen whether studies using such approaches will help the research community in Western nations to rediscover the importance of power structure and institutional change.

Close-knit, media-rich, and teeming with political dynamics, Hong Kong is in many ways an ideal place for the study of political communication. However, two interrelated questions keep haunting political communication researchers in Hong Kong: How typical or atypical is Hong Kong? And how should researchers balance the need to generalize their findings and to contextualize them? It is our belief that the theoretical concepts generated in Hong Kong and the patterns of interactions between mass communication and political change should have different degrees of applicability in other settings. There is no doubt that we should stress the universality that is embodied in the particular. However, we should also be aware of how contextual differences may impinge upon the interpretation of the general. For instance, while media professionalism in the West might be criticized for its tendency to contribute to the reproduction of the status quo, in Hong Kong professionalism seems to be highly important for the media and journalists to fend off the growing pressure from Beijing authorities and to do greater justice to the needs of the society.

The key questions for researchers in Hong Kong are how well concepts are explicated and whether the contingencies for the patterns observed are made explicit enough. For researchers who want to maintain a dialogue between polit-

ical communication studies in Hong Kong and international scholarship, the common practice is to capture their findings in conceptual terms and to relate to mainstream theories. In fact, throughout this chapter it should be clear that Hong Kong researchers have borrowed many concepts from Anglo-American communication research, which should not be surprising given where most Hong Kong scholars obtained their doctorates.

As a small city, Hong Kong does not have a large communication research community and does not have many local social science journals. In addition, many local universities have long tied their evaluations of faculty members with "international publications." These further heightened Hong Kong researchers' incentives to connect with the international scholarly community. Yet on the other side, it is also up to the international scholarly community to have a better appreciation of political communication studies in Hong Kong and to not bracket them out as merely "regional studies" or "international communication." It takes the effort of both sides to create and maintain the dialogue that can bring out the general theoretical contributions of "Hong Kong studies."

Many studies reviewed in this chapter have contributed to the study of specific hypotheses (e.g., spiral of silence, priming, etc.) or phenomena (e.g., talk radio, Internet and politics, etc.) in political communication. The above discussions have listed some, but by no means all, specific findings that deserve the notice of researchers from other countries. What requires some final remarks, however, is one of the most important contributions that research in Hong Kong has offered to the study of political communication in general: its ability to highlight the significance of a power perspective on political communication.

By this perspective, the rise and ebb of press freedom and the roles of the media are to be viewed as the results of and reactions to changes in the power structure. Press freedom is primarily a function of the distribution of sociopolitical power, decreasing as power is centralized and increasing as power is pluralized. Political communication in Hong Kong is to a large extent a dialogue with the "China factor." This has been true both before and after the handover. During British rule, China served as a countervailing force of the colonial government, which, ironically, prevented the latter from enforcing any draconian laws. By the same token, the existence of the critical pro-China press helped to expand the ideological space in Hong Kong. Without China, press freedom in Hong Kong would have been reduced during the British colonial rule. However, the influence of China has reversed during the political transition and after the handover in 1997. By law and by informal control, China has been gaining influence over Hong Kong, especially on sovereignty issues, the appointment of top administrators, and key policy issues. Therefore, the growing influence of China in virtually all domains has redefined the parameters for political communication in Hong Kong.

Stressing the importance of the "China factor" in political communication should not blind us from the inseparable tie between media and local interests.

Attested by the cases of the anti-Beijing pro-democracy movement in 1989 and the anti-subversion law demonstration in 2003, it is clear that the media will reassert their defense of Hong Kong when their basic rights and interests are at stake—even at the risk of offending the central authority in Beijing. Market consideration and the concern over local interest serve to prevent the Hong Kong media from appeasing Beijing too fast and to too great an extent.

Two other important phenomena tied to the power perspective also deserve further discussions. One relates to the study of the enhanced media roles in Hong Kong. In the partial democracy of Hong Kong, the mass media are found to have performed a surrogate democracy function. This enhanced role is the result of a historical lack of full democracy, the existence of a slow and extended crisis during and after the handover and the loss of government legitimacy in post-1997 Hong Kong. It remains to be seen whether the media will go beyond this surrogate democracy role and venture into political advocacy.

Self-censorship is another concept that has gained currency in the study of political communication in Hong Kong. Its prominence can be attributed to the return of sovereignty to China, a country notorious for its abhorrence of press freedom. However, self-censorship in Hong Kong is still developing. What was at one time considered to be self-censorship might have become accepted as professional norms or routinized practices. While the problem of self-censorship needs to be mapped out on a longitudinal basis, it will be interesting to see how self-censorship, manifested as such or in Hong Kong journalists' strategic rituals, is applicable in other societies. The issue is especially relevant given the post-September 11 situation in the United States and Europe. While self-censorship has traditionally been considered in relation to the power of big business in Western societies, media coverage that followed the September 11 terrorist attack has led to renewed concerns with government as the threat to press freedom (e.g., Graber, 2004).

It is certainly an oversimplification to reduce political communication to nothing but power structure. The understanding of political communication in Hong Kong calls for studies in various areas, at different levels, with multiple methods, and using interdisciplinary approaches. As of now, there is a pressing need for studies that try to relate social structural change on the macro level to actual practices at the micro level. Ethnographic studies of journalists and opinion leaders in the area of self-censorship, for instance, appear to be badly needed. What we want to stress here is that studies following a variety of approaches are warranted if we are to have a comprehensive understanding of political communication in Hong Kong.

There is also a lot to be done in the studies of elections, party identification, public opinion formation, and other areas that prevail in mainstream political communication in the West. Two main factors explain why such topics did not command much scholarly attention among communication researchers in the past. The first factor is the relative unimportance of elections in Hong Kong's political system. The second factor has to do with the relatively small size of the

research community, which does not allow for a more even division of labor. However, as competition among political parties intensifies in the midst of further democratization and as the research community expands, the situation may improve.

Despite the fact that the Hong Kong media have been flooded with public opinion polls, these polls have been under-analyzed for theoretical purposes. The political use of polls and the social meanings of public opinion in Hong Kong have yet to be explored thoroughly. Without question, public opinion is playing an increasingly important role in public deliberations that characterize modern Hong Kong. A conspicuous feature of the politics of public opinion in Hong Kong is the public's reliance on social protest as a form of social expression. Especially the mass demonstration that took place on July 1, 2003, has brought democratization, an issue displaced from the public agenda after the handover, back into public awareness.

Thus, how the media and collective action work together in pressuring the government clearly deserves more scholarly attention. While sociologists and political scientists have conducted studies in this area, including the rise of protests, class formation and the changing state-society relationships, media scholars need to build on this base and incorporate the elements of media and political communication. It would be interesting, for example, to study how the public, the government, and the civil society interact with one another in the ensuing debates. As the parameters for political communication are changing, the public discourses between social leaders and journalists are especially intriguing. In short, the analysis of discursive struggles is as important as the study of social formation in understanding how different social forces interplay politically.

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Chapter 2

Political Communication in Dual Discourse Universes

The Chinese Experience

Zhou He

It was spring 2003 in Guangdong Province, south China. A mysterious disease began to spread quietly and rapidly. People showed symptoms of something similar to pneumonia, first in one county and then throughout the entire province. They were sent to hospitals and treated with the antibiotics for pneumonia, but to no avail. Some of the early patients died, and those infected later collapsed into critical conditions. Threatened by the spread of a fatal and unknown epidemic, health officials reported the incidents to the national authorities and began to treat the disease as a national secret. An anonymous Short Message Service (SMS) message reached a journalist at the *Southern Metro*, a popular tabloid in the province, who published the first story on what was later known as the SARS—Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome—epidemic. Several news organizations followed suit, but before long, all coverage by local news organizations was censored, and the only coverage that appeared in the official media was cover-up stories by the Xinhua News Agency.

However, a large number of SMS messages were sent out each day by citizens among the population to update news on the epidemic from Guangzhou to Beijing and across the entire country. These messages included statistics and hearsay about the incurable nature of SARS, rice and salt shortages (which sparked large-scale panic shopping for rice and salt in Guangzhou and Beijing), the sealing off of Beijing, and the imposition of martial law. Following the 2003 Chinese Lunar New Year in early February, more than 300 million SMS messages were sent out, forming an extensive virtual network of news and information about the epidemic.

This is a typical scenario of political communication in China: a natural disaster being politicized and communicated in two communication spheres, or, in academic terms, two discourse universes—the official universe supported by the Party/state-controlled media, and the private one carried by communication channels such as SMS, the Internet or word of mouth.

In a society where communication has been ubiquitously politicized, one would expect a significant amount of research on and understanding of political communication. However, that is not the case in China. Research on political communication is scarce, fragmented, limited in breadth and depth; and

the understanding of it is restricted and hampered—at least in its published form. Under suppressive governmental conditions and within the scholarly tradition of the annotation of Confucian classics, scholarly research has primarily concentrated on propaganda, despite sporadic efforts to apply general Western mass communication theories and to shift the research focus from propaganda to public opinion. Unfortunately, the research findings regarding the impact of political communication on the audience and the formation of public opinion are only rudimentary and often politically interpreted.

It is a relatively easy task to critique Chinese scholars' research on political communication because the amount of serious academic work in this field is very limited. The difficulty is in understanding the nature of the research and what is behind its conceptualization, implementation, and interpretation. Therefore, I start this chapter by examining some of the important factors that influence such research. I will look at the formation of conflicting discourse universes during China's transition from Communism to bureaucratic capitalism, the research tradition of Chinese intellectuals, and the difficult dialogue between Western political communication theories and the Chinese context. Then I will discuss in detail the research by Chinese scholars with regard to the specific modes and components of political communication.

The Formation of Dualistic Discourse Universes In China

From the outside, China is often seen as a tightly controlled society where speech and expression tend to be uniform in the press and among the people. However, a closer look from inside reveals subtle but significant changes in the sphere of speech and thought in public and private. In 2000, He (2000b) proposed the thesis of dualistic discourse universes in China—the official Communist universe and the private pluralistic universe. He was a lone published voice among communication scholars and practitioners interested in or working for the Chinese media, despite the fact that many Chinese scholars might have shared his view privately. Today, even some Chinese officials in charge of the Party's propaganda have publicly acknowledged the existence of two significantly differing and conflicting discourse universes in the country. For instance, Nan Zhengzhong, director of the country's official Xinhua News Agency, recently told a seminar that there are two "universes of public opinion: the media universe and the oral universe" and that the media may risk losing their influence on public opinion if the two universes do not correspond to each other (April 17, 2004).

As Communism loses its position as a genuinely believed ideology and becomes a ritualized facet of a regime that strives to prolong and justify its politically and morally shaky mandate, two distinct discourse universes have emerged in China. One is the official discourse universe, which is characterized by vagueness, abstractness, ambiguity, and indoctrination, and the other is the private discourse universe, characterized by nonhegemonic expressions ranging from radical nationalism to liberalism, materialism, and extreme cynicism.

While the official universe occupies all the public space of expression, especially the Party/state-controlled mass media, the private universe survives primarily in the oral sphere. As new communication technologies provide new channels for information dissemination outside the government's conventional control, the nonofficial, private discourse universe extends its boundaries to such platforms as the Internet and SMS messages.

The formation of conflicting discourse universes in China started when the unchallenged loyalty to Chairman Mao and the Communist Party waned near the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and political dissent mounted. However, it was not until the Tiananmen Square movement and the collapse of Communism in the Eastern Bloc in 1989 that the two distinct discourse universes began to take a discernible form. Communism, as an overall ideology, has died in most parts of the world and is virtually defunct in China. Over the last 20 years, the Chinese Communist Party has embarked on a reluctant move toward "state capitalism" or "bureaucratic capitalism." The reform initiators understood that economic reforms would mean a departure from the Communist ideology. Deng Xiaoping, for example, decreed at the early stage of the economic reforms that no debate should be held within the Party on whether the reforms were "capitalist" or "socialist," knowing that no matter how adept the reformists would be in their defense of the reforms, they simply could not dress up the obvious capitalist mechanisms as "socialist practices." Therefore the Chinese Communists have downgraded the type of "socialism" in the country to a "preliminary stage of socialism" (He, 2000b).

As a result, Communism in China has been turned into ritualized rhetoric that is characterized by vagueness, abstractness, ambiguity, and indoctrination. It serves as the expression of the official public discourse universe that presents certain concepts as being true and unchallengeable. For example, it asserts that socialism is better than capitalism; democracy in the West is hypocritical; the Communist Party is the both the savior of China and the only political party able to govern a vast, complex country like China; and anything good comes out of socialist morals or the spirit of self-sacrifice for collective interests. It claims that crimes in China are rare and are severely punished by the effective legal system; that corruption is rare and is often disclosed and punished; and that disasters are rare and are often occasions on which heroism demonstrates itself. In addition, it propagates the idea that sports are a demonstration of a country's political power, and that sports victories bring honor to the motherland. Finally, it states that the economy is developing healthily under the able leadership of the Communist Party; and that political stability is perpetual (He, 2000a).

The private discourse universe takes shape as Chinese citizens have gradually and painfully learned that Communist ideology is obsolete and irrelevant to their lives in an increasingly market-oriented economy. Three decades of poverty, brutality, and hypocrisy imposed in the name of Communism have driven the Chinese people away from Communist ideology. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese intellectuals have developed a sense of self-awareness and

a vaguely deviant ideology that, though often expressed or disguised in the terminology of Marxism, embodies principles of liberal capitalism such as democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, rule by law, separation of the three branches of the state, professional autonomy, and equality (He, 1996).

The majority of the Chinese populace, including the intellectuals who have benefited most from the economic development, have tacitly and unmistakably formed a private discourse universe despite the crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen movement, the ensuing tighter control over discussion of political reforms, and the benefits of a fast growing economy—all of which dampened earlier political enthusiasm. Most Chinese do not like the Communist rhetoric in the public discourse universe but tolerate it in the current repressive political setup, treating it mostly as a system of vague and often meaningless symbols. They accept and even welcome specific reform-oriented administrative policies such as the "open-door" measures and the introduction of the market economy, but they do not identify with the grand ideology of Communism and the authoritarian political system derived from it. Either reluctantly or voluntarily, they buy into the myth that the Chinese Communist Party is the only political force that is capable of governing a vast and complex country and ensuring a certain level of social stability—a realization most Chinese have rejected in the wake of the chaotic political reforms in Russia. However, they also have begun to notice that the Party is gradually converting itself into a "social progressive party" in that it has tacitly given up much of the substance of Communism, such as public ownership and class struggle; has started to regard itself as the representative of all people, not just the working class; and has allowed owners of private enterprises to join the Party.

In the private discourse universe, however, Chinese can and do express any thought—from free discussion of moral taboos to political criticism. In fact, their criticism of the government and political system is as severe as some of the radical voices in the West.

This openness is particularly evident in Chinese folklore satire. I have collected more than 300 pieces of this folklore, which is widely circulated among Chinese people. Of the satire pieces, commonly called *duanzi* (similar to punch lines in a standup comedy show), about one-third are sex-related jokes, and the rest are political satire targeting the rampant corruption and the incompetent top leaders in the country, which would have been punished as political crimes 20 years before. These satirical pieces are openly exchanged through private and semiprivate channels such as interpersonal conversations, the Internet, and SMS. In fact, at the height of their popularity in the early 2000s, they were a "must" at banquets, nightclub talk shows, conversations among friends, and all types of light-hearted gatherings. Never before in Chinese history has there been so much satirical political folklore so widely and openly disseminated.

This folklore is only part of the expanding private discourse universe. As new communication technologies provide additional channels for information dissemination outside government's conventional control, the private discourse uni-

verse extends its boundaries beyond the "oral" sphere to platforms such as SMS through wireless or fixed-line telecommunication channels and the Internet. In 2004, about 290 million Chinese were using cellular phones, and 68 million were connected to the Internet (Ministry of Information Industry, 2004). These new media have been used extensively to maintain and expand the private discourse universe. For a time, most of the SMS messages were pieces of the smart folklore ingeniously disseminated through the wireless phone as people discovered that the broadcast function of the cellular phone could serve as a quasi-mass communication channel.

The existence of those two divergent discourse universes greatly affects Chinese political communication and its study. Indeed, it creates a unique dilemma to political communicators and researchers, making most of the theories on the impact of political communication found in other contexts in the West either difficult to apply or irrelevant.

Practitioners, Scholars, and the Two Discourse Universes

Living with a dying Communist ideology and the two different discourse universes it created, Chinese political communication practitioners and researchers face a unique dilemma: believing in one thing but having to say or do another. This is what social psychology calls "psychological dissonance." According to Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, when people are in a "negative drive state," that is a situation that forces them to hold two conflicting thoughts or act in opposition to their beliefs, they suffer a psychological conflict. As a result, they are motivated to reduce this dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

Journalists, the main professional political communicators in China, are forced to balance their jobs in the public discourse universe with their personal ideological beliefs. He (2000b) has found that Chinese journalists, especially those who have to communicate political messages, adopt one or more of the following five strategic modes to reduce their cognitive dissonance: (1) adopting government-sanctioned ideology both publicly and privately by changing their personal beliefs if need be; (2) holding both ideologies separately by keeping their work life and home life separate; (3) promoting the Party ideology at work but privately countering the sanctioned communication; (4) attempting to extend the boundaries of or change their public discourse in line with their privately held ideology; and (5) expressing their private ideology to alternative public media, such as foreign media outlets. It has been found that most Chinese journalists use the third strategy to cope with their cognitive dissonance, although some bold journalists also adopt the fourth and fifth strategy—often ending up with officially sanctioned punishment or exile.

What the Chinese political communicators face is not a unique dilemma but a historically repeated phenomenon that has generally preceded or accompanied the transition from one ideological system to another. Examples include the French, Russian, and Islamic revolutions. The unique situation in China is that

most people, even the elite ruling class, do not support Communist ideology. This has led to an unprecedented "grand hypocrisy" in politics and social life, where fork-tongued communication and double-role playing become the unashamedly accepted social and political norm.

Chinese communication researchers face the same dilemma as Chinese journalists. What they can publish in journal articles and books is as strictly regulated and controlled as that in the popular media. Unlike academics in democratic societies, they do not enjoy the protection of an ivory tower that transcends the political and functional struggles of public communicators. Tenure in a Chinese university or membership in a scientific community does not grant them political immunity. Indeed, they are as vulnerable to political punishment as regular journalists. For instance, there have been cases in which researchers were demoted or removed from their positions as a result of publishing "deviant" thought. One noticeable case was Sun Xupei, the country's top researcher on mass communication. After publishing several works on press freedom and press law in the late 1990s, he was demoted from the directorship of the Journalism Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the flagship of communication research and a stronghold of liberal thought in China.

Chinese communication scholars also need to adopt the same strategies as do Chinese journalists for dissonance reduction and survival. Unlike journalists who must remain in China for their employment, however, a significant number of Chinese communication scholars have immigrated to countries where academic freedom is protected. Most of China's best young scholars are currently working for universities in such countries as the United States, Canada, Australia, Britain, Singapore, and Hong Kong after having earned doctoral degrees from prestigious universities in the West. The U.S. based Chinese Communication Association, for example, has a membership of about 200, most of whom are Chinese scholars who have immigrated to the West. For those scholars, living in the West means not only a better life but also an opportunity to speak and publish freely. This brain drain since the late 1980s has inflicted a tremendous impact on the development of communication research in China. The Chinese expatriate communication scholarship tends to be critical and detached. It also uses theories and methods that are in accord with international academic standards and trends, not with the current situation in China. Normally written in the English language, it forms the foundation of research on Chinese communication in the international academic community. Unfortunately, however, this body of literature is not easily accessible to communication scholars in China.

For Chinese scholars living in China and publishing in the domestic public discourse, conformity with the correct political line is the rule of the game, despite the fact that academic publications enjoy slightly more leeway than the popular mass media. Even so, scholars have to choose their research topics carefully in order to not encounter any political pitfalls. Generally, research topics that discuss politics, political preferences, and political reforms are deemed risky and tend to be avoided. My interviews with the country's leading communication researchers

reveal that most of them adopt the third and fourth strategies of dissonance reduction discussed earlier. They conform to the public discourse rules when working publicly and express their own views privately, or they gently push the public discourse boundaries and air their own views more strongly private.

Most Chinese scholars are fairly well-informed about the international academic trends and are close to the reality and key issues of communication practices in China. In small but private conferences, they often offer insightful observations and thoughts on Chinese communication, political or otherwise. Much of the time, however, Chinese scholars are forced to spend their talent and time on how to package their findings and thought in politically correct rhetoric.

In addition to their effort to juggle two discourse universes, communication researchers in China are also unconsciously influenced by the ideological, cultural, and linguistic framework of a 50-year-old public discourse that has blanketed two generations of Chinese. This framework has nearly replaced the traditional Confucian cultural framework and rejected new input from other frameworks, especially Western, which are seen as detrimental and "bourgeois." This hegemonic framework has set the parameters for much of the thought in academic and everyday life. As a result, Chinese communication researchers who have something insightful to say, in many cases unconsciously choose the safe, comfortable rhetoric of the dominant public discourse universe as their vehicle of expression.

The Chinese Way of Thinking

The ritualized Communist rhetoric has another adverse impact on communication research in China: reinforcing and distorting the Chinese way of understanding human beings and their activities. There has long been a debate about the possible differences between Eastern and Western viewpoints. The general agreement is that there are noticeable differences—although they are often overemphasized and exaggerated. In the West, Greek and especially Socratic ideas strongly influenced the development of Western thinking and values. In the East, Chinese and Indian philosophy created a different way of seeing life. Broadly speaking, Western societies strive to find "the truth," while Eastern societies are more interested in balance. Westerners put more stock in individual rights, while Easterners emphasize social responsibility. The Western world is concerned with verifiable and observable reality, Easterners tend to view reality as illusory (Blatavasky, 1988) and favor "intuition over reason" (Barrett, 1956).

These philosophical differences have led to differing approaches to theoretical reasoning and scientific discovery. Western philosophical movements have employed scientific explanation, prediction, and control of natural reality as practiced by the "hard" sciences of physics, physiology, chemistry, or biology. Although several variant and opposing schools of thought have emerged, the

mainstay of Western social science research has been theorizing laws and rules of the reality through rational and systematic methods and observation.

In contrast, the Eastern approach to studying humans and their social relations features speculative theories and meditation. In this approach, humans discover the nature of reality by experiencing it directly, without thought. This is accomplished through a variety of meditative processes. It was through meditative processes that great Chinese thinkers such as Confucius and Lao Tze conceived and populated the Confucian philosophy and Taoism. However, after 221 BC, the philosophic and metaphysical search in China came to a halt when Confucianism was established as a national philosophy. At this time, all literate people were required to study Confucian doctrines. The imperial regime "enslave[d] the most brilliant and creative minds of China," deadened the capacity for practical and creative thinking, and stifled reform (Keenan, 1977; see also Yang, 1992). As a result, over the past two millennia, the Chinese exploration of human interactions has developed into a tradition of interpreting and annotating the ethos of the Confucian classics, commonly called "divine works" (*sheng xian shu*).

The introduction of Marxism in China in the early 1900s as part of an enlightenment movement was meant to debunk Confucianism, encourage philosophical pluralism, and lead to social progression. The critical spirit of Marxism and the dialectic reasoning well suited to Chinese thought could have been combined with the Chinese way of thinking to revolutionize the exploration of social relations and human beings, contributing to the development of philosophy and metaphysics in the world. However, Marxism, like Confucianism, was established as an unchallengeable, divine philosophy in China following the victory of the Communist movement in 1949. Communism replaced Confucianism as the new "scripture." Consequently, Chinese scholarship in humanities and social sciences has been reduced to the interpretation and annotation of Marxism, Maoist thought (Mao Zedong's revolutionary preaching), and Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic, whatever-works theory.

Western Communication Theories in China—A Difficult Dialogue

Since China began its economic reforms and opened itself to the outside world, Western theories and research methods have been introduced in Chinese communication studies. A significant number of the most important Western works on communication have been either translated into Chinese or incorporated into Chinese scholars' writing on communication.

However, the integration of Western political communication theories into China's political reality has not been easy. Because there are no genuine elections in China above the township level, many Western theories involving elections and voting behavior are not applicable. Moreover, there is not a specialized field of political communication in China's scholarly community because much of

the mass communication in China is already politically oriented propaganda—despite the fact that some general books or textbooks on political communication have been published in the country, such as Shao Peiren's *Political Communication* (1990) and Zhou Hongduo's *On Political Communication* (2004). Therefore, the study of mass communication (and much of interpersonal communication) in China is mostly synonymous with the study of political communication. When almost all communication is propaganda, there is no clear boundary of political communication per se.

When Western communication theories are applied to China, difficulties arise. Take the example of critical theory, which appears to suit Chinese scholarship because of its Marxist origin and critical thrust. First proposed by Karl Marx (1963) and later developed by other leading scholars, critical theory aims to increase awareness of capitalist exploitation and bureaucratic domination and to create a widespread demand for liberation. It is critical in two senses: it raises consciousness about oppression, and it calls for a "criticism of life" to resist and to change the existing system of domination and exploitation. Recent movements in the critical tradition, such as postmodernism and critical cultural studies, tend to reject earlier ideas such as Marxist economic determinism, but continue to conceptualize communication in ways that emphasize ideology, oppression, and critique. Thus, this theory may serve the Chinese political communication community well. It is politically correct under the general umbrella of Marxism and is in accord with the tradition of Chinese philosophical thinking. It may also work as a useful analytical tool for the study of the new class relationships, the alienation of power, and the hegemony of the ruling class's ideology in what I would call a "bureaucratic capitalist society" (He, 2000b).

However, critical theory has not been popular in China. Most Chinese scholars feel that critical theory can be used only in the analysis of capitalist societies, not socialist systems. Pragmatically, scholarly criticism of the status quo and cultural domination in the current political system would invite retribution by the government. In his book on media criticism, for example, Liu Jianming briefly described critical theory but devoted almost the entire book to criticism of the specificities of media organization, management, genre, news content, journalistic style, and techniques in news production. His interpretation of Marxist philosophy on communication boiled down to a few simple laws of communication, such as that people need news, that the people's press incorporates all the elements of the spirit of the people and serves as the articulator of people's everyday thought and emotions, and that the press should provide more well-expressed opinions, concrete facts, and knowledge rather than empty talk, high-pitched hoopla, and self-appreciation (Liu, 2001, p. 204).

Obviously, this is a very pragmatic and opportunist interpretation of Marxist philosophy as related to the press and communication. It eschews the critical spirit of Marxism and pays no attention to the emerging and increasingly popular school of critical communication theories that have evolved from Marxism.

His view is typical of the self-proclaimed Marxists in China, whose adoption of Marxism derived from the opportunist "deification of Marxism" and from the ritualized Communist rhetoric in China.

Another popular Western theory is "agenda setting," which asserts that the mass media, by selectively covering some issues and ignoring others, influence what people think about and what they consider important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This theory has been widely discussed in China, appearing in all major textbooks and some original works on communication. On the surface, this seemingly universal concept can be easily applied in the Chinese context. However, problems emerge when researchers attempt to study this concept in China. First, for the concept of agenda setting to work, three conditions must be met: first, there must be a free press that selects issues on its own without direct political influence from the government or other forces; second, the media, not other types of social institutions, influence the agenda of the audience; and last, the audience must have free choice of media content and be influenced by the media voluntarily, without coercion or threat.

The press in China is far from being free, and agenda items are often imposed by propaganda officials or directly by the Communist Central Committee. A good example is the campaign to wipe out Fa Lun Gong, a large semireligious meditation group that organized a surprise rally outside the headquarters of the Chinese government in a protest against official criticism of the organization. Threatened by the protests, the Communist Party arrested leaders of the organization and carried out a nationwide propaganda campaign through all types of media to "disclose the evil side" of Fa Lun Gong and to label it an illegal "cult." For a time, all the leading news stories in the Chinese press were about the Fa Lun Gong. In addition, people were fed the Party line through nonmedia channels, such as government documents and compulsory study sessions. Thus, both administrative and political channels dumped the government's agenda onto people with coercive and punitive measures, such as forcing people to denounce the organization, swearing allegiance to the Communist party, and disclosing others who might be involved in Fa Lun Gong. In this situation, any study of agenda-setting effects by the media would be meaningless since the government was clearly setting the agenda.

Another popular Western theory is the "spiral of silence" developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in Germany. The spiral of silence theory states that the media present the mainstream ideas as being normal, especially mainstream political ideas. The people, out of fear of being socially isolated, keep silent if they feel that their ideas do not match what the media present as normal majority ideas.

> Observations made in one context (the mass media) spread to another and encouraged people either to proclaim their views or to swallow them and keep quiet until, in a spiraling process, the one view dominated the pub-

> lic scene and the other disappeared from public awareness as its adherents became mute. This is the process that can be called a "spiral of silence." (Noelle-Neumann, 1984, p. 5)

As it has been in agenda setting, the spiral of silence theory has been diffused widely among Chinese media scholars. The theory's application in the Chinese context, however, is difficult for some of the same reasons discussed earlier. The separate discourse universes again complicate this theory. People may fear social isolation, but they normally do not feel isolated in the private discourse universe as their ideas that deviate from those in the press are usually the majority ideas in that universe. In fact, many Chinese today take pride in expressing their deviant views in the interpersonal public sphere and cyberspace through the Internet and SMS. In such a context, the spiral of silence may turn into a "spiral of outspokenness" in the nonofficial discourse universe.

Many other Western communication theories also do not translate well into the unique Chinese context. This has put Chinese political communication scholars in an awkward position. On the one hand, they have access to a fairly large body of literature on political communication, but on the other, they cannot easily transplant and apply it. As Xu Yaokui observed in his book *A Critical Evaluation of Western Press Theories*:

> In the process of research, there will emerge new discoveries and endless new theories. In this regard, researchers in the West are way ahead of us. Their courage to explore new frontiers, to achieve new progress and to contest each other is worth learning. Researchers in our country have made a lot of contributions to the continuation and development of our own press theories, to the resolution of certain major issues in the practice of the press in the country, and to the introduction and evaluation of foreign press and communication theories. Frankly, however, how many inventions have we created? How many theoretical contributions have we made? Compared with Western researchers in the area of press theories, what our scholars lack is "creativity."… The theoretical research on the press in our country can claim to be creative only when we step out of the narrow mode of relating others' thought. (Xu, 1998, p. 408)

In sum, the political environment, the Chinese way of examining human relations, the shortage of suitable theories, and the lack of research methods restrict Chinese political communication scholars. Although some Chinese scholars have realized the existence of two ideological spheres and the resultant conflicting discourse universes, they cannot situate their studies in this context because it is politically incorrect and risky. In terms of philosophy and research methods, they are confined by the Chinese way of thinking and lack rigorous research tools to engage in empirical research in the social sciences. More

important, to protect themselves from governmental retribution, they have to disguise their true meaning with politically correct jargon, vague euphemisms, and Marxist terminology.

The Chinese "Political Person"

The first thing will examine in Chinese scholars' exploration of political communication is the "political person," the person that political communication attempts to influence. An interesting but often overlooked study of this topic is *The Chinese Political Person—A Survey Report of the Political Attributes of Chinese Citizens* by Zhang Mingshu (1993). Conducted in 1988 when the political climate was fairly relaxed, with the government allowing discussion of political reforms, this first and perhaps only study of its kind was published in 1993 in the wake of the crackdown on the democratic movement in Tiananmen Square in 1989. It was based on a survey of 1,995 randomly selected Chinese citizens in 13 cities and investigated the respondents' political attributes in three areas: political attitude, political knowledge and skills, and political participation.

The study created an "index" or a comparable measure of the "political quality" of Chinese citizens, giving them a 4.9 on a composite scale of 10 points ranging from 1 = low to 10 = high. Political attitude was worth 5 of the 10 total points, political knowledge and skills 3 points, and political participation 2 points. Chinese citizens scored 2.8, 1.9, and 0.2 on the respective sections. By generalizing the results from the survey on the basis of the 1990 national census data in China, the author estimated the index of political quality of the entire nation, including 870 million peasants, at 3.3 points (with different weight assigned to urban and rural residents). Based on published works in the West, the author estimated the political quality of citizens in the United States at 5.5 to 5.6, Britain at 5.7, Germany at 5.4 to 5.5, and Japan at 5.2 (Zhang, 1993, p. 151–173).

The study concluded that, because the political quality of the Chinese people was much lower than that of their counterparts in Western democratic countries, China would have a long journey toward democracy and universal suffrage. China would go through what San Yat-sun—the founding father of the Republic of China after the downfall the Qing Dynasty—called more than 80 years earlier the three stages of democratization: military rule, rule that trains the citizens, and constitutional democracy. This study showed that those respondents who had the highest level of enthusiasm in political participation had the least experience in it, a phenomenon most evident among Chinese students. Finally, the report argued that it was premature to practice democracy in China, advocating instead a type of "new authoritarianism" extensively promoted by the government and popular among some Chinese intellectuals, both before and after the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement.

Nevertheless, some of Zhang's (1993) findings, especially those about the sources of political information and political influence, are of interest to scholars of political communication. Zhang found, for example, that 20.9% of the

respondents thought that politics is a struggle among a tiny portion of people for power and other privileges; that 77.6% believed that politics concerns everybody (as opposed to 13.6% who believed that politics concerns only the leaders); that 21.4% thought that good politics depends on the system and 61.9% thought that it depends on both the system and human beings (as opposed to only 9.3% who thought that it depends solely on human beings); that 73.3% often and occasionally discussed political issues; and that 54.8% said that they would support demonstrations if needed.

The study also found that most of the respondents claimed the mass media (newspapers, television, and radio) to be their source of political knowledge. When answering the question about their main source of political knowledge and information (multiple choices allowed), 40.3% named the mass media, 24.8% work unit study sessions, 24.2% interpersonal communication, and only 10.7% school education. Of the respondents, 31.9% read newspapers on a daily basis, 44.6% watched the television everyday, and 21.4% listened to the radio everyday. Only .9% of the respondents listened to the Voice of America (VOA—a significant alternative source of news on China's politics and international affairs) everyday and only 0.5% read overseas newspapers and magazines everyday. Finally, the study found that respondents had more trust in the Chinese media than in overseas media in this pattern: 63.8% in Chinese daily newspapers, 68.5% in Chinese television, 63.6% in Chinese radio, 11.9% in overseas newspapers and magazines, and 14.1% in the VOA. Based on these findings, the author concluded that the Chinese people were among the most media-exposed groups in the world, and that they were "full of trust" in the "mouthpieces of the Party." This, the author claimed, was "fortunate" for the Chinese Communist Party and government (Zhang, 1993, p. 124).

As the first examination of the "political person" in China, this study quantitatively measured political attributes of the Chinese people and found some interesting patterns. However, it was also limited in several ways. There was no effort made to theorize the findings so that they are more meaningful or could be applied to existing political theories. Some explanation was offered as to why the "political person" in China was the way he or she was, but, unfortunately, much of the interpretation was stretched to fit the current political status quo. It also failed to explain why the Chinese people, previously politically active in the numerous nationwide political movements such as the Cultural Revolution, suddenly became fairly indifferent to political affairs and participation. Finally, the study hailed it as a Party victory that more than 60% of the choices in trusted news content were made on the Party propaganda machines. It failed to see the picture from the other perspective—that the disagreement by 40% of the responses meant a political disaster for the Chinese Communist Party, which completely controlled both the media and the population in general for about 40 years. Even if the Party favorably interpreted these figures, much of it could be attributed to press-initiated reforms and the relaxed political environment in 1988.

Further inconsistencies trouble this work. For instance, it found that only 0.5% of the respondents read overseas print media but did not explain that this was because these media were not allowed to circulate publicly in China; only the very privileged had access to them in locked reading rooms or otherwise restricted locations. Indeed, those who had this privilege were very likely part of the ruling establishment, thus unlikely to voice any dissent. The fact that respondents were aware that the survey was conducted by an official Chinese organization means that the finding that only 0.9% of the respondents listened to the VOA might have been distorted. In fact, two other independent surveys commissioned by the VOA found that 2.2% of the residents in Guangzhou (a southern coastal city) listened to the VOA in 1985, and 1.6% of the residents in Nanning (another southern city) listened to it in early 1989 (He, 1996, p. 81).

From Propaganda to Public Opinion Study

As discussed earlier, there is not a well-defined field of political communication within the communication research community in China. Political communication takes mostly the form of propaganda because the lingering Communist framework still dominates the public discourse universe. Thus, Chinese scholars' efforts to understand political communication have mostly focused on the study and rethinking of propaganda. While the majority of scholars view propaganda as a positive communication activity and attempt to find more effective ways of doing it, some have begun to distinguish propaganda from other types of communication and reconsider its merits and effectiveness.

Ai Guangming (1988, pp. 6–8) argued that propaganda is an important mode of communication and most human communicative activities entail elements of propaganda. He contended that the concept of mass communication is used to replace propaganda in the West simply because it is a useful tool for doing propaganda. He stated that the West engages in plenty of propaganda, bombarding its citizens with propaganda in order to uphold elite values and policies; the only difference between Western and Chinese propaganda, therefore, is that the West is more skillful and covert in its propaganda.

In another analysis of propaganda, Li Bing (1990) asserted that the study of mass communication is always the study of propaganda, calling mass communication "clothed" propaganda. Citing early research on propaganda and the application of persuasive communication research in the West, he maintained that mass communication research has originated from propaganda research, that today it focuses mainly on propaganda, and that its results are applied in propaganda.

Scholars who study propaganda always have an interest in finding out ways to enhance its effectiveness. Studies in this area generally have agreed that the effectiveness of propaganda is influenced by four factors: the communicators, the content, the environment in which propaganda takes place, and the receivers (Dai, 1992). Z. Zhou (1988) suggested the following measures to make propaganda more effective: introducing scientific elements into propaganda; targeting the

audience better; making propaganda more interesting; making propaganda more intuitive and visual; and finally, using techniques that are oriented toward guidance rather than toward persuasion and indoctrination. Arguments like this have offered only commonsense knowledge and have added very little to the large body of literature on propaganda and persuasion accumulated in the West over the past century.

On the other hand, some Chinese scholars such as Zhang Duxing and Zhang Chengxing have argued that communication and propaganda are two different concepts and areas. While communication is oriented toward neutral dissemination of a wide variety of information without any set political purpose, propaganda is geared toward controlled dissemination of persuasive content to influence people's attitude and behavior for predetermined political purposes (Zhang & Zhang, 1987).

There is agreement between the two camps on one issue: The propaganda carried out for more than 50 years in China has been flawed and ineffective. This realization has compelled many scholars to shift their attention to research on public opinion. From 1993 to 1998, 504 studies of public opinion were published (Shao, 2002). This proliferation of public opinion studies has been attributed to three factors by Chinese scholars: the economic reforms and the development of a "socialist democracy" in China that call for more respect for public opinion and allow scholars to learn from the West about public opinion; the rapid growth of mass media and the increasing importance of news in the formation of public opinion; and the introduction and development of modern social sciences in universities (Shao, 2002, pp. 324–325). Another major factor implicitly underscoring studies of Chinese public opinion is the concern over public opinion that often contradicts what is promoted by Chinese political leaders. In fact, the Chinese mass media helped to mobilize the masses and legitimized the prodemocracy movement during the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement (He, 1996). Alarmed by the widespread dissent and drifting public opinion, the Chinese government imposed the task of "correctly steering public opinion" on the mass media and all propaganda apparatus—a euphemism for guiding and manipulating public opinion in favor of the Party and the existing political system.

Although this new strategy was devised using traditional propaganda approaches, its recognition of the long-denied existence of public opinion spurred scholarly interest in this newly acknowledged concept. However, because of the tradition of annotating the Communist scriptures as a way of doing scholarship and the need to placate the government, much research effort has been made to justify and show support for this new "innovation" in the war to win people's minds. Of the earlier mentioned 504 public opinion studies published between 1993 and 1998, for example, more than 70% were articles pledging support for or providing annotations to the "correct public opinion steering" pushed for by various top leaders, especially paramount leader Deng Xiaoping and Party general secretary Jiang Zemin. Serious academic research made up only a small portion of the studies (Shao, 2002).

Public opinion research is a new area of study in China as well as a new issue in Chinese politics; so a lot of effort was made to map out the field, establish it as a legitimate academic and political pursuit, introduce Western concepts and theories, and set up some basic conceptual structures. The majority of these studies are rudimentary, descriptive, and overlapping. Most end with very limited innovations and conceptual insights, often falling into the pitfalls of traditional propaganda models or the self-justifying loop of orthodox Marxist communication theories. However, some are ambitious and attempt to establish a new theoretical system with "Chinese characteristics," thus creating some developments worth noting. The following are some of the representative studies along this line.

Negation of Traditional Uniformity in Public Opinion

During the mid-1950s, Chairman Mao established the rule that all opinions, public or private, should be uniform and be in accordance with those of the top leadership. Ever since, uniformity in public opinion has been a sacred doctrine in China. Even today, "keeping uniformity with the Central Party Committee" and "playing the main melody" (the Communist doctrine) are strictly implemented policies both within and outside the Communist Party. Nevertheless, some scholars in the field of public opinion research have posed serious challenges to this doctrine. The most outspoken of these is Liu Jianming, the country's leading scholar in public opinion research. In his book *Heavenly Justice and Public Minds—Issues in Social Public Opinion in Contemporary China,* Liu traced the evolution of the practice of uniform public opinion in China. He pointed out that public opinion in China is "a mix of belief and political suppression" (Liu, 1998, p. 16) and concluded that social public opinion will eventually break the "thick ice" of uniformity in public opinion that has suppressed the will of the masses and strangled science and democracy (p. 20).

Many outspoken Chinese scholars share Liu's clearly deviant and critical views. Jiao Guobiao, associate professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at the prestigious Peking University, published an even more critical article on the Internet (2004). Titled "Condemning the Central Ministry of Propaganda," the article listed "14 crimes" of the ministry, comparing it to the propaganda ministry of Nazi Germany. The article described the ministry as the obstacle to the development of civilization in China, the largest and strongest "protective umbrella" of evil and corrupt forces, and the stronghold of the most stupid, backward forces. It proposed to either shut down the ministry or make it completely transparent and accountable. The essence of the article was that the Ministry of Propaganda exercised unlimited power to enforce uniformity in public opinion and, by doing so, has become the most secretive and unrestricted ideological controller in the country.

Even those more conservative scholars have agreed that public opinion can be and is indeed diverse. Chen Lidan (1999), another leading Chinese scholar in public opinion research, said that there is a divergence in pubic opinion among

different interest groups and in different regions. He contended that people in different socioeconomic strata will form different opinions based on their economic interests. People in Northern China, Shanghai, and Guangdong, for example, form their own opinions because of their regional cultural traditions and their high level of economic development.

Most scholars are relatively cautious in their published views on public opinion uniformity. Shao (2002), for instance, said that the handling of the relationship between uniformity and diversity in public opinion is important among professional communicators in the propaganda industry and that it is impossible and unrealistic to have uniformity in public opinion at all levels. However, he also said that "As far as the general direction, major issues and the main melody are concerned, there should be uniformity.... Our public opinion in the press should play the main melody loud and, at the same time, heed diversity, thus organically unifying the main melody and diversity" (p. 303).

Public Opinion's Role in the Balance of Power

Commonly termed "supervision through public opinion" in Chinese, this theme has appeared periodically in Chinese political communication research, depending on the general political climate. During the Zhao Ziyang administration in the mid-1980s, the Chinese Communist Party, which was apparently influenced by the *glasnost* movement in the Soviet Union, also attempted to introduce some measures of transparency into its decision-making process. Responding to the public's mild appeals for more press autonomy and an increase in the press's "watchdog" status, the former General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, in his political report to the 13th Party Congress in 1987, said: "[The Party] should utilize all modern journalistic and propaganda instruments to increase coverage of activities of the government and the Party so that public opinion can play a supervising role...." (cited in Shao, 2002, p. 372). Such a role of public opinion, however, was downplayed by the Chinese government in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement and the downfall of Zhao Ziyang.

Governmental supervision through public opinion resurfaced as an official slogan only when Jiang Zemin secured his power in the post-Deng era from 1997 onward and attempted to demonstrate some moderate gestures of democratic progress. Like many lip-service "democratic measures," such as participation in political affairs by non-Communist parties and citizens' right to free expression, supervision through public opinion was devised only to manipulate public opinion and to inflict chilling effects on low-level government or party officials by criticizing them or exposing their wrongdoing in the press.

Thus, it is not surprising that most Chinese communication scholars view "supervision through public opinion" in a politically correct fashion. In fact, Shao's (2002) analysis of the 504 public opinion studies published between 1993 and 1998 shows that most of them focused on public opinion steering while only a small portion is dealt with governmental supervision through public opinion.

Liu Jianming, on the other hand, has adamantly advocated checks on political power by the public. In his influential book *Principles of Social Public Opinion* (2002), Liu argued that supervision through public opinion is the most effective way of realizing people's democratic rights and the most effective means to mobilize millions of people to participate in the management of a country (Liu, 2002, p. 196). "If supervision through public opinion is dominated by power," Liu said, "supervision is reduced to ground zero, and people are deprived of all democratic rights" (Liu, 2002, p. 198). To ensure that supervision through public opinion functions, mechanisms of checks and balances should be established in the political system.

Kang and Lei (1995) argued timidly much along the same lines. They agreed that press democracy and supervision through public opinion are the yardstick of a democratized social life but contended that the supervision should be within the confines of the existing constitution and should not be in conflict with the political policies and laws of the Party and state. Similarly, Shao (2002) sees supervision through public opinion as a supplementary part of "steering the public opinion," arguing that such a role should benefit the development of the socialist productive force, preempt potential problems, and function to aid the society in its effort to enhance the rule of law.

Although scholars such as Liu have implicitly expressed the idea that a system of checks and balances and rule of law are the cornerstones of effective public opinion, none of them discussed the point that, for public opinion to work to guide the government, the press must be completely free from political control and the three branches of the government should be independent. Under a system where the Communist Party controls the press, the government, the legal system, and the legislative branch, public opinion can rarely find its way into the tightly controlled press to exert pressure on the government.

Public Opinion Steering

Most public opinion studies have concentrated on what is termed public opinion steering—a task that involves manipulating public opinion in favor of the Communist Party and the repressive political system. Nearly every study unquestioningly supports this concept and proposes ways to improve its success. In his book *Public Opinion—Research on Public Opinion Steering*, for example, Chen (1999) attempted to establish a theoretical framework for public opinion research in China and explored the optimal way to steer public opinion. Although the title of his book contained the phrase "public opinion steering," he used "public opinion guidance" (*yulun yingdao*) in most places in the text when Western concepts were discussed. It is unclear whether he consciously distinguished between the two concepts, but it is certain that he acknowledged the active, dominant role of those who are in a position to steer public opinion in China. Chen observed that the Chinese mass media failed in their steering of public opinion in several ways: They were overly zealous about the market economy but did not understand con-

sumerism; they did not consider the public's level of acceptance when hard-selling the Party's policies on economic reforms; they did not explain new policies in a timely manner; they did not accurately explain new policies or emphasize the conditions for their implementation; and they did not understand the laws and regulations well enough to provide information and guidance.

Chen found that these errors were caused by several factors—mistaken perception of reality, pursuit of sensational news effects, the lure of public interest, and deteriorating professional ethics. He proposed several ways of improving the role of the mass media in steering public opinion: leading the popular culture to an "exquisite" or high-brow culture; creating an environment of public opinion for healthy, rational consumption to counter consumerism; and calling upon the inner conscience of the public so as to create an atmosphere of public opinion for social morals and market ethics. He even proposed some specific persuasive techniques for the steering of public opinion in different regions in the country. For example, he suggested that candor and enthusiasm be employed in public opinion steering among people living in Northern China; market smartness and high-brow spiritual pursuit be played up to influence the Shanghainese; and flexibility, culture, and long-term visions be emphasized to persuade the Cantonese.

Like many Chinese researchers on public opinion, Chen was mostly concerned about the potentially adverse effects the media might have on the social morals of Chinese people. He observed that the press often provided erroneous guidance for the vulnerable Chinese people caught in a social transition from the practice of austere egalitarianism before the reforms when everybody was equally poor to extreme consumerism and materialism during a time of insufficient spiritual sustenance. Unfortunately, neither he nor his peers adequately explored how to influence public opinion in relation to these issues because such exploration would be politically risky.

Characteristics of Chinese Public Opinion

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to gauge public opinion in China and to discover some of its basic characteristics. Pioneering this field is the Public Opinion Research Institute of the People's University in Beijing, founded in 1986 and led by Yu Guoming, one of China's leading public opinion scholars. The institute has been one of the most active among the some 130 polling organizations in the country today. Over the years, it has conducted scores of surveys and polls on people's opinion on a variety of issues. Most of its studies have been readership or audience surveys for specific mass media organizations.

Two of its studies, however, are related to political opinion. The first one, conducted in 1987, was a survey of 1,200 Beijing citizens focusing on political attitudes. The survey found that: 92.7% of the respondents agreed with the statement that "citizens should not concern themselves with personal issues only but should concern themselves more with major issues in the country"; 81.5%

did not agree with the statement that "I am not interested in the work of the government"; 74.4% believed that "if political democracy is not established, there is no genuine modernization even if the economy is modernized"; 96% appealed to the press for public discussion of political reforms; and 81% thought that it was time to carry out political reforms in the country (Yu & Liu, 1993, p. 89). The study created a composite measure to gauge the respondents' level of political democratic awareness and found that 35% were of high awareness, 62% were of moderate awareness, and only 3% were of low awareness. Yu Guoming (1993) concluded that it is feasible and necessary to implement political reforms in China. The second study was a survey of 200 public figures and celebrities done in 1989. It found that 47.7% of the respondents thought that the government's popularity among citizens had somewhat declined, 19.8% thought it had noticeably declined, and only 0.5% felt that it had significantly improved (Yu & Liu, 1993, p. 112).

Those studies were conducted before the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement and therefore reflected political public opinion at a time when political controls were relaxed and *glasnost* was practiced in China. Since then, there have been very few, if any, studies of this nature. In fact, in the wake of the Tiananmen Square movement, opinion polls of all types were prohibited for a considerable period of time. Even after they were permitted again, political polls remained taboo, creating a high level of uncertainty about political attitudes in China.

Political public opinion in China changed significantly in the 1990s when the country embarked on a modernization campaign for economic prosperity at the expense of political progress. The crackdown on the Tiananmen Square movement obviously dampened people's publicly expressed zeal for political reforms and political participation. Also, the severe governmental control and suppression had an omnipresent chilling effect on the citizens. Finally and most importantly, the unexpectedly rapid economic growth and the opportunities provided in the 1990s appeared to have hijacked the Chinese people's will to engage in political activities.

On the basis of several surveys conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, Chen (1999) observed that contemporary public opinion in China demonstrated the following features. First, it reflected a shift from both political and economic "excitement" to "confusion" about various new things going on in terms of reforms—such as the idea of letting some people get rich, private ownership, and exploitation by "capitalists." Although Chinese publicly accepted those new developments, they emotionally and privately rejected or resisted them. Second, it demonstrated tendencies among the public of being "relentless" and "short-sighted" in such aspects as taking risks and making quick money. Materialism, low taste, indifference to politics and to others, relentlessness, lack of responsibility, and treachery—these were the six typical cultural–psychological traits of the Chinese people in the transition from a planned economy to a market economy (Shao Daosheng, 1996, p. 193). Third, public opinion was dispersed across various interest groups based on their demographics and socioeconomic status, across different regions, and

between the urban and rural areas, unlike the uniform public opinion in the pre-reform era.

Agenda Setting in the Chinese Context

Since the theory of "agenda setting" was introduced to China in the early 1980s, there has been a great deal of enthusiasm in it. The main reason for its relative popularity is that this theory fits Chinese thinking about the power and functions of the mass media. The theory's assumption that the media are moderately or even extremely powerful is in accordance with Communist perception of the role of the media, and its emphasis on the media's influence on the public's views suits the needs of political leaders.

Some Chinese scholars seem to view this theory as a cure-all conceptual framework that can answer many questions in mass communication. Li Li (2003), for example, uses this theory to analyze such new social phenomena as the interest in beauty pageants, collective frenzies over anything that is considered trendy and fashionable, and consumerism—attributing them all to the agenda-setting function of the print media, television, movies, and the Internet.

Other scholars have quickly linked agenda setting to effective propaganda or "public opinion steering." Liao Xiangzhong (2005), for example, argued that, because one of the main missions of the Chinese media is to propagate the Party's policies by influencing public opinion, agenda setting is important to effective propaganda and public opinion steering. He suggested that the Chinese mass media should do the following to boost the effects of propaganda: (1) present a picture close to reality as opposed to the traditional presentation of good news only; (2) spread the Party's policies in a more timely fashion; (3) interpret the Party's policies comprehensively instead of presenting fragmented interpretations; (4) examine long-term effects; and (5) create an informational environment favorable to political stability and economic development.

Liu Xunchen (2002) asserted that a meticulously designed media agenda is an effective way of steering public opinion and that such an agenda should help to make specific issues salient to the public. In this sense, the correctness of the media agenda is the key to the correctness of public opinion steering. Similarly, Peng Yuanfang (2003) employed this theory to investigate the coverage of a "model" policeman and found that the media played a "good" role in pushing this "bottom-up issue" to the public's agenda.

Many Chinese scholars have confused the media's agenda-setting function with the agenda-*building* process. In their analysis, they often focus on the media's agenda through interpretations of media content, but rarely correlate the media's agenda with the audience's agenda. In a study of the agenda-setting function of the *Global Times*, a newspaper affiliated with the *People's Daily* and specializing in the coverage of international affairs, Li Xiguang and Lu Yannan (2004) simply tallied and ranked the number of news stories on such issues as Taiwanese affairs, Sino-American relations, terrorism, and Russian arms development—assuming

that these agenda items exert an agenda-setting effect on the audience. Along the same line, Chen Tongxi and Deng Lifeng (2002) studied the formation of three popular agenda items on the Bulletin Board System (BBS) forum "Strengthening the Nation" and presented a meticulous record of how those items evolved and declined. Although they focused primarily on the agenda-building process, they claimed that they were examining the media's agenda-setting effect.

The first serious, systematic study of the media's agenda-setting function in China was undertaken in 2001 by a group of scholars at Fudan University in Shanghai. Zhang Guoliang, Li Benqian, and Li Mingwei (2001) drew a random sample of 351 people in Shanghai through the telephone directory and asked them what they thought were the most important issues facing both themselves and the nation. They combined the audience's personal and national agendas to establish an audience agenda with items in the following rank order of importance: (1) economic development; (2) public security; (3) environmental protection; (4) corruption; (5) employment; (6) China's effort to join the WTO; (7) transportation; (8) the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China; (9) development of Western China; (10) reforms in the political system; (11) reforms in medical insurance; (12) housing reforms; and (13) "spiritual civilization." Next, they conducted a content analysis of three newspapers (the *People's Daily*, the *Liberation Daily,* and the *Xinmin Evening*) to come up with the media's agenda with items in the following rank order of importance: (1) economic development; (2) public security; (3) "spiritual civilization"; (4) environmental protection; (5) transportation; (6) development of Western China; (7) corruption; (8) the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China; (9) reforms in medical insurance; (10) reforms in the political system; (11) employment; (12) housing reforms; and (13) China's efforts to join the WTO. They matched the two sets of agendas and found that five items corresponded and eight did not. The authors concluded that their findings supported the agenda-setting function of the Chinese media because some of the agenda items in the mass media matched those among the audience.

Unfortunately, this study suffered from several obvious weaknesses. It did not follow the standard cross-lagged design in agenda-setting research where the media agenda and the audience agenda are examined at two points in time to detect the antecedent agenda. Therefore, the study could show only the association of the two sets of agenda at one point in time, not the time sequence of the media's and audience's agenda. Another flaw is that the study offered no conceptual justification for combining the audience's personal and national agendas as those two may be significantly different and pertaining to different issues. If the audience's national agenda had been compared with the media's agenda, there might have been even more mismatches between media agenda and public agenda. Finally, as the Chinese scholars were not accustomed to sophisticated statistical analysis, they did not do a rank-order correlation of the two sets of agenda to show the possible extent of the relationship between the media agenda and the audience agenda.

About one year later, two scholars from the same research group published another agenda-setting study conducted in Shanghai and Yunnan, a province in Southwest China. Li Benqian and Zhang Guoliang (2002) studied the relationship between the audience agenda, the media agenda, and economic reality as reflected by China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). They surveyed 350 and 318 randomly selected subjects in Shanghai and Yunnan, respectively, asking them to rank five industries (manufacturing, financial, tourism, information, and commerce) in terms of importance. They also conducted a content analysis of five local and national newspapers to examine the amount of coverage devoted to those industries. In addition, they checked the GDP of the five industries a year before the study and at the time of study. Finally, the researchers did a rank order correlation analysis of the two sets of agenda. They found no significant correlations between the audience agenda and media agenda at the time of study. In addition, neither of the two agendas correlated significantly with reality as reflected by the Chinese GDP. The only significant correlation was found between GDP a year earlier and the audience agenda at the time of study. Based on these findings, the authors concluded that economic reality rather than the media influenced the audience agenda in China in this particular case.

As compared with other studies in this field, this study was much more sophisticated and ingenious, especially in that it used the GDP of five industries as an indicator of what was going on in reality and how it would affect the audience agenda. However, the correlation of only five rank-order items (five industries) made the findings dubious because the fewer the number of items in the equation, the more likely the two sets of agenda items would be to correspond to each other. Moreover, there was no rigorous measure (such as the time sequence) to ensure the examination of a causal relationship between the media agenda and the audience agenda.

It is important to note that some Chinese scholars who studied media agenda setting have noticed the impact of the "private discourse universe," but none of them has ever pointed it out clearly. In a study of the official media agenda on the BBS forum "Strengthening the Nation," Li Xiguang and Qing Xian (2001) found that the agenda in the postings regarding the incident of the Sino–U.S. airplane clash was dramatically different from the agenda in the official Chinese media. They also found that the forum agenda was noticeably influenced by coverage of international media channels such as CNN. What was implied in those findings was that the agenda in the private discourse universe—sustained by nontraditional mass communication channels such as the BBS forum—differed significantly from the agenda in the official media.

In another study of a university BBS forum, Tong Xiaoyan (2003) found that participants focused on the massive demonstration in Hong Kong against national security legislation in 2002 (an issue not covered by the official Chinese media) and that they modified and reconstructed the issue as the number of participants snowballed. The issue appeared on the forum as some students posted stories from the Hong Kong media. It was picked up by other members on the

forum, who then discussed the issue or contributed more stories they collected from other sources. As the number of participants interested in this issue grew, the importance of the issue increased significantly to become one of the most important issues among members of this Chinese cyber community. This was a perfect example of how the audience's agenda was influenced by information provided in the unofficial discourse universe.

Propaganda, Reversed Spiral of Silence, and Satirical Folklore

When studying political communication in a society with two distinctive and conflicting ideological and discursive universes, Chinese researchers often find themselves dealing with unintended or reverse effects of political communication. For example, when the official Chinese press promoted the Party General Secretary Jiang Zeming's campaign to urge Party members to engage in correct political endeavors, to educate themselves to a higher level, and to have good ethics (the "Three Talks" movement), the promotion caused widespread dissent and an abundance of political satire. One such piece of satire picked on the three top leaders in China and urged them to do the things the Party promoted, implying that they themselves lacked good education, were immoral, or were not politically savvy. Despite the risk of pointing out this reverse political impact, some of the country's most outspoken liberal scholars have explored phenomena such as the negative effects of propaganda, a reverse spiral of silence, and satirical folklore.

Negative Effects of Propaganda

Several scholars have noticed and publicly expressed concerns over the negative effects of propaganda, a fact long observed by Chinese scholars overseas but consistently denied or downplayed by the Chinese leadership. The most undisputed empirical study was a survey of a random sample of 1,880 university students nationwide done in 1986 and 1987 by the Public Opinion Research Institute at the People's University in Beijing. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the propaganda campaign against the 1986 student movement in China (Yu & Liu, 1993, p. 124). As expected, the study found that students' ideology was oriented toward democracy and freedom. When the students were asked whether they felt that the official Chinese media coverage of the 1986 student movement was credible, 53.2% said "no," a proportion 10 times higher than the 5.4% average found earlier in other places. This was a shocking finding to both the researchers and propaganda officials in China. The researchers attributed the failure of the propaganda campaign to the following factors: The language used in the campaign to describe the students was extreme and malicious; the entire campaign was unfair, negative, and pedantic; it was a traditional "one voice" campaign without any balance; and some of the messages

were conflicting (Yu & Liu, 1993, pp. 124–125). To improve the effectiveness of the mass media in future propaganda campaigns, the authors suggested that the media should: provide timely and cautious coverage of breaking events that are of great impact; value the hard-won credibility of the press; pay attention to the arts and techniques of propaganda by employing various forms of persuasion and by establishing trust and understanding between the leaders and the masses; and truthfully and comprehensively reflect public opinion in society (Yu & Liu, 1993, p. 129).

In addition to this empirical study, other studies have offered general observations of the negative or unintended effects of propaganda and public opinion steering. Qing Shaode (1993), for example, noted that propaganda in China has suffered from several conventions established over the years, such as overly uniform and standardized messages, propaganda done in secluded environments, and one-way indoctrination and education. Such propaganda does not meet the people's information needs, contains information that contradicts what people experience in their lives, employs primitive methods that insult the intelligence of the audience, stands against the predisposed views and emotions of the audience, and loses its own credibility. Qing suggested four strategies to avoid losing the audience: engaging in indirect propaganda that avoids sensitive issues people loathe, conducting propaganda that covers both sides of the issue, softening the tone of the language of propaganda, and carrying out effective propaganda by taking advantage of the audience's dissent.

Liu Jianming (1998) has observed that there is some political content in the press that serves the purpose and interests of those who generate it, but that also harms the majority of people in society. Such content often contains fabricated facts, dubious arguments, abusive political slander, and hollow political slogans. It misleads the audience and, as a result of its frequency, repels the audience and causes cynicism.

The Reversed Spiral of Silence

Unlike the agenda-setting theory, which has been fairly well received and empirically tested by Chinese scholars for its proposition of the media's "positive" or "neutral" power, the theory of the spiral of silence has not been checked in any serious manner because of its implicit assumption that the media "suppress" deviant ideas, which is politically incorrect in a political system with the ruling party claiming to represent all people. However, a quiet debate emerged in the early years of the 21st century when the Chinese population adopted the Internet for airing its views. One discussion of this was offered by Yao Jun (2005), a graduate student of journalism at Wuhan University, who argued that the spiral of silence can be reversed on the Internet as people in the silent minority air their deviant views under the protection of anonymity. Expression of deviant ideas is increased as they gather support from others who disagree with the norms presented by the official media. Liu Jianming's earlier thought (2002) concurred

with this thinking, which asserted that a reverse spiral of silence could occur in three situations: when audience members react to obvious manipulation of public opinion; when there is a conflict between ideologies and the media represent only the ideology the audience members think is problematic; and when audience members counter "fabricated consensus."

On the other hand, Liu Hailong (2001) contended that although some people assume that the anonymity of online expression might provide the participants with some level of protection, making them bold in their expression of deviant ideas, the phenomenon of the spiral of silence still exists because online users participate in various types of opinion communities, thus feeling the same psychological pressure from that community. Moreover, as political interference spreads on the Internet, coercive pressure would begin to silence deviant ideas. In this scenario, the spiral of silence only takes a slightly different form.

Although this debate has involved a very limited number of scholars and has been carried out only conceptually, it shows that Chinese scholars are beginning to challenge Western concepts in light of the unique Chinese experience while borrowing Western ideas to explore their own situation. As in the application and testing of the agenda-setting theory, Chinese scholars are examining the contradictions in political communication caused by the conflicting discourse universes.

Satirical Political Folklore

Finally, the widespread political folklore in China has caught the attention of some media scholars. Chen (1999), for example, observed that folklore in China is different from rumors. It is a special form of rational, satirical, and often exaggerated expression showing certain attitudes and targeting common social problems and specific public figures. It demonstrates that the normal channels in the society fail to examine certain social or political issues and that there is a gap between the elite stratum and the grassroots classes in their perception of reality and their political needs.

Liu (2002), who traced the historical development of satirical political folklore, observed that such folklore is an expression of public opinion that demonstrates the outstanding abilities of the masses to express their opinions in folk art. He argued that the current folklore focuses on corruption in the bureaucracy and gives early warning to social issues that may develop into great social crises.

Reflected in the satirical political folklore is an almost full spectrum of nonofficial political and moral views. At one end of the spectrum are messages that are politically subversive and morally "decadent," at the other end are humor and jokes that can be found in many other societies. In between are smart pieces that are politically or morally satirical and antagonistic to the Communist political and moral norms. Extreme or mild, most of the political satire in China is subversive in the sense that it challenges the hegemony of the official discourse, perpetuates "deviant ideas," brings together those "isolated selves" and gives them a

sense of being part of a widespread collective, serves as a refuge in which people exercise a reversed spiral of silence, and legitimize a pluralistic and lively nonofficial discourse.

Unfortunately, Chinese scholars have not seriously studied this aspect of bottom-up political communication nor have they linked critical folklore with the demise of the Communist ideology, dissent among the populace about the current political system, or the formation of two conflicting discourse universes.

Conclusions

Chinese scholars have devoted a considerable amount of energy and time to the study of political communication, propaganda, and "public opinion steering." Under the repressive political conditions in China and the scholarly tradition of annotating classic scriptures that discourages creative thinking, what Chinese scholars can do at present is indeed quite limited. Their research is primarily propaganda-oriented despite sporadic efforts to apply general mass communication theories and to examine public opinion rather than propaganda. In its current form, such research contributes very little to our understanding of propaganda, which has been thoroughly examined for nearly 90 years in other contexts. Because of severe political constraints, the research on the formation and impact of media on public opinion is rudimentary and often politically interpreted.

The most promising and interesting observations are the backfiring of propaganda, the role of the Internet, and folkloric satire in political communication. As of now, however, those insightful observations have not been well explored and conceptualized, nor have they been put in the context of the demise of the dominant Communist ideology and the formation of dualistic discourse universes. As the world's most populous country and a society undergoing unprecedented transitions, the Chinese experience can offer some interesting insights into political communication in the context of two conflicting discourse universes. The most important question, however, is: Can Chinese scholars analyze these issues within the political confines imposed upon them?

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Chapter 3

Political Communication in Taiwan

Chingching Chang

In the decade between 1987 and 1996, Taiwan undertook a dramatic political transformation that changed both the nature and the role of the mass media in the country. Taiwan began this period as a one-party authoritarian state whose government strictly controlled both the media and its messages. In contrast, by the end of the decade, Taiwan had become a fully developed democracy characterized by an explosion of media outlets that enabled politicians and the public alike to experiment with various forms of communication, freely exchanging policies and ideas.

This chapter examines political communication research in Taiwan before, during, and after this extraordinary decade. Before 1987, political communication research helped to pave the way for the political liberalization that followed. Unable to talk about their own political system because of the tight political controls, Taiwanese communication researchers focused on improving their understanding of political communication systems that existed in other, more democratic countries. When democracy came to Taiwan in 1996, it triggered a rapid growth among the mass media, thereby encouraging the study of political communication among Taiwanese researchers. However, according to several studies of Taiwanese communication research (Hsiu & Chen, 1996; Lo, 2000; Wang & Tseng, 1993), only between 8 and 14% of all communication research conducted from the 1960s to the mid-1990s focused on political communication. Thus, it is not surprising that communication scholars have not caught up yet with the rapid political changes brought by Taiwan's political transformation. As this chapter will show, they also have failed to examine political communication from a Taiwanese perspective and to develop an appropriate theoretical framework.

In this chapter I will analyze political communication studies published in six major Taiwanese communication journals between 1967 (when the first study was published) and 2006. The studies are categorized according to Chang's (2004) guidelines in terms of "sources" (who controls what political information is transmitted); "content" (how political information is presented); and "effects" (how political information affects people). Because a significant amount of research has been devoted specifically to the understanding of political com-

munication during election periods, a distinction also is made between election studies and nonelection studies.

The six major Taiwanese communication journals from which the studies are drawn are *Mass Communication Research*, which has been published by the Journalism Department of National Chengchi University (NCU) since 1967; *Public Opinion Research Quarterly*, published by The Public Opinion Association of Taiwan since 1973; *Journal of Advertising Research*, published by the NCU Department of Advertising since 1993; *Journal of Radio and Television*, published by the NCU Department of Radio and Television since 1992; *Journal of Electoral Studies*, published by the NCU Election Center since 1994; and *Chinese Communication Study*, published by the Chinese Communication Society since 2002.

Three Phases of Political Communication in Taiwan

Blumer and Kavanagh (1999) assert that political communication progresses through three distinct periods in most democracies: party-controlled media, television-based communications expansion, and, finally, media proliferation. The authors note that political communication in the first period is primarily party-controlled and characterized by a strong confidence in political institutions and appreciation of consensus. The second period is characterized by (1) less exposure to party propaganda; (2) fairness and impartiality becoming the basic criteria for political communication; (3) more public involvement in the political process because of television's wider reach; and (4) use of television by political leaders as the main vehicle for conveying political information. Finally, the third period is marked by "the proliferation of the main means of communication, media abundance, ubiquity, reach, and celerity" (p. 213).

Taiwan has progressed through each of these phases in a distinct fashion, witnessing many important changes that shaped political communication. The abolition of martial law in 1987 and the first general election for the presidency in 1996 significantly shifted the power of political communication from the government to the people. Thus, the events of 1987 and of 1996 divide the 40 years under study into three distinct time periods. The first period represents the time under martial law, which was imposed in 1949 when the Kuomintang (KMT) retreated to Taiwan from China. Martial law included government-imposed restrictions on who could print newspapers, where they were printed, and even how many pages could be printed. In addition, the government exercised firm censorship and required the media to disseminate progovernment propaganda.

The rescission of martial law in 1987 ushered in the second period of political communication and transformed Taiwan from a stringently controlled state to a free society. In the 1989 legislative election, political candidates were allowed to advertise in newspapers and magazines for the first time. Then, in the 1991 National Assembly elections, candidates were finally allowed to run political advertising spots on television. Overall, the media environment underwent dramatic changes in this second period. The emergence of new communication

technologies was especially influential in broadening public access to political information in Taiwan and changed the way political information was transmitted. Satellite television, for example, became legal in 1989, followed by cable television in 1993. The Internet, on the other hand, became available to the general public in 1995 (Education Bureau, 1995).

The 1996 presidential election marked the arrival of the third period of political communication. For the first time, Taiwan's citizens were allowed to vote for presidential candidates. This political freedom resulted in dramatic political changes only four years later when Shui-bian Chen, the candidate of the opposition Democratic Progress Party (DPP), defeated the Kuomingtang (KMT) candidate for president. As a result, for the first time in Taiwan's postwar history, a party other than the KMT ran the government. The 1996 presidential election was also the first election in which all candidates established formal campaign Web sites to communicate directly with voters in Taiwan (Peng, 2001). The reach of the new media increased significantly during this period with cable television reaching 83% of homes in 2004 (Chang & Fu, 2004) and Internet access available to almost 58% of the population in 2005 (Internet Communication Union [ITU], 2005).

Each of these three time periods was characterized by changes in the approaches taken by scholars in their analyses of three key elements of political communication: news sources, news content, and the effects of communication on the public. This chapter will examine why certain political communication topics were explored in each of the three periods and how the findings can be interpreted against the unique political and academic background of each period.

The First Period 1967–1987

Very few political communication studies were published in the first period between 1967 and 1987. Since criticism of the government was not allowed, Taiwanese communication researchers circumvented the suppression by reviewing Western studies that addressed the important role the media play in a democratic society. Thus, most articles published in Taiwan during this time were reviews that either discussed political communication in general or introduced political communication research from the United States and other Western countries. A study by Zhu (1984), for example, addressed the relationship between mass communication and democracy, implicitly promoting the idea that the mass media should play an unbiased role in a democratic society. In his other work, Zhu (1982a, 1987) elaborated on how political discourse functions as a system of symbols and how it might be used to reach a common ground among the public. In addition, a number of reviews presented major theories of political socialization discussed in the academic literature of the United States (Zhu, 1982b). Others described the global flow of political information (Han, 1983), reviewed political persuasion as discussed by U.S. researchers (Peng, 1984), or evaluated the influence and accuracy of opinion polls in elections (Ian, 1970).

During the period of martial law, only five studies explored the role of the media in elections (Li, 1982; Lin, 1971; Peng, 1986; Wang, 1972; Yang, 1973). This paucity might be explained by the fact that media-based political campaigns simply were not allowed under martial law in Taiwan. Instead, the Election and Recall Laws restricted political campaigning to six specific activities: (1) establishing campaign headquarters; (2) hiring campaign workers; (3) holding election forums; (4) distributing fliers and business cards; (5) using campaign vehicles or loud speakers; and (6) visiting voters in the election districts (Cheng & Pan, 1989).

Among the studies that explicitly examined the mass media as a source of political information in Taiwan, most showed newspapers to be the primary source (Chen, 1980; Lin, 1971; Wang, 1972). For example, 90% of college students surveyed by Lai (1978) reported reading newspapers for political information every day. Wang (1972) reported that 83% of the surveyed voters in Ja-yi city said that they read newspapers during the 1969 election campaigns, while Lin (1971) found that 83% of the voters surveyed in the 1969 election said they supported specific candidates because they had read positive stories about them in newspapers.

Because the government controlled the mass media tightly, interpersonal communication also played an important role during this time period. During the 1969 election, for example, 14% of the voters relied mainly on their families and relatives for information about the election, while 14% of college students discussed political issues reported in the media with their parents (Lai, 1978). Political forums, one of the few legal campaign activities, also were important sources of information about the candidates, with 18% of the voters learning about the candidates' positions from these forums in the 1969 election (Wang, 1972).

Media Sources 1967–1987: News Objectivity

Few studies during the first period examined the "sources" of political communication, or how political information was controlled and manipulated by the government, interest groups, officials, candidates, and media institutions (Chen, 1980). Although the media were strictly controlled by the government, none of the studies could deal directly with government censorship. Instead, most media studies concentrated on news "objectivity" as a proxy for government control and scholars investigated whether objectivity in Taiwanese news coverage varied as a function of source or type of media. Chen (1980), for example, examined whether the objectivity of news coverage of an assembly meeting was determined by the source or by newspaper ownership. Her findings suggest that the media coverage was more biased towards members of opposition parties that towards politicians of the ruling party. In addition, the official party and state press featured more (but also less critical) news coverage of the politicians of the ruling party compared to the privately owned newspapers.

Media Content 1967–1987: Interpretive News

Few studies in the first period examined the content of political news coverage in Taiwan. The only study that analyzed news in an election context was Yang's (1973) investigation of the prevalence of interpretive news in political campaign coverage. The author found that interpretive news accounted for 70% of the campaign coverage in the 1972 legislative election, most of which was more likely to be positive than negative about the candidates.

Other researchers focused on news coverage in nonelection settings. Hsu (1974), who analyzed 139 news stories in three major Taiwanese dailies published in the early 1970s, found subjective inaccuracies in about 70% of the stories. The most common inaccuracies were overstatements and misinterpretations of the interviewees' comments, which the author attributed to problematic editorial policies and a general lack of knowledge among journalists.

In another study published during the first time period, Chang (1980) conducted a content analysis of Chinese propaganda fliers dropped on Taiwan between July 1978 and June 1979. The fliers were distributed after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, which the Chinese government believed offered an opportunity for reunification with Taiwan. Focusing on the fliers' persuasive tactics and symbols, Chang found that the fliers appealed for unification by emphasizing the importance of political regimes and the historical connection between Taiwan and China.

Media Effects 1967–1987: Reliance on Newspapers for Political Information

During the first period, Taiwanese communication scholars also did not directly examine the effects of media exposure on people's political knowledge or their attitudes toward candidates. Instead, most of them explored the type of mass media used by voters as sources of campaign messages. In a survey that was conducted after the 1969 legislative election, for example, Lin (1971) asked respondents to recall how they had learned about the candidate and what might have influenced their voting decisions. Among those who did not know the candidates before the election campaign, more respondents (62 .6%) learned about them from the media than from any other source, including election gazettes (19.5%), election forums (4.7%), family members (4.7%), and colleagues (9.5%). Most respondents (46%) who voted for a particular candidate cited positive stories in the newspapers as the primary reason for doing so. A much smaller number of respondents also said that they had been influenced by family preferences (12%) or talks with friends and colleagues (17%). In a similar analysis of the same election, Wang (1972) found that most respondents (33.5%) cited the media as a major source of candidate information, followed by election gazettes (24.1%), election forums (17.8%), and friends or colleagues (14.1%).

Other studies focused on voters' perceptions of media credibility. Peng (1986),

for example, found that voters in Taipei rated newspapers as the most credible source of election information during the 1985 election. Yang (1987), on the other hand, found that 62% of respondents believed that political forums provided them with important political information in the 1985 election, while 68% believed that these forums helped them to evaluate the candidates' ability to deal with issues.

Earlier research on media effects in nonelection contexts focused on the role the mass media play in political socialization. Lai (1978), for example, examined the degree to which college students in Taipei discussed political issues with parents and friends, as well as the extent to which college students relied on the mass media for political information. The study found that newspapers were the primary source of information for the students—a somewhat surprising finding given the fact that government-controlled newspapers in this period lacked objectivity and most of the political information provided was heavily biased.

Because the media could not be trusted under martial law, interpersonal communication played an important role in information transmission. In telephone interviews with 251 Taiwanese respondents, for example, Yang (1979) found that 38% of respondents had heard of the normalization of Sino-American relations from people they knew, including family members, neighbors, or friends. Interestingly, about 8% of the respondents heard the news from strangers, suggesting that the news spread quickly through interpersonal channels even among those who did not necessarily know each other. Those who got the news from the mass media, on the other hand, cited television (33%) and radio (16%) as their main information sources.

The Second Period 1987–1995

As martial law and its restrictions on the press were lifted in 1987, political power in Taiwan shifted from the government to the people. Under public scrutiny, the media no longer served as a government propaganda machine and began to diversify in an attempt to satisfy the public's right to know. In addition, the news media started to serve as an important source for political information about opposition parties.

The end of martial law also allowed media research to flourish freely in Taiwan (Chang, 2004). As a result, the number of studies on political communication grew significantly between 1987 and 1995, and three new Taiwanese communication journals began publishing. Moreover, in the early 1990s, an increasing number of Taiwanese scholars returned from the United States with graduate degrees in communication studies. Most had received extensive scientific training and thus were able to explore the content and effects of political communication with empirical studies (Wang & Lo, 2000).

With the relaxation of official restrictions on election campaigns, political communication studies began to focus on Taiwanese elections, which now prominently featured television advertising and televised debates (Chang, 2004).

Table 3.1 Content, Context, and Media Types Analyzed in Taiwanese Communication Journals between 1967 and 2006.

		First Period 1967–1987	*Second Period 1987–1995*	*Third Period 1996–2006*
Content	Review	9	2	4
	Empirical	10	19	42
	Critical	—	1	8
	Case studies	—	—	6
Context	Election	5	13	35
	Non-election	14	7	21
	Both	—	2	4
Media Type	General mass media	—	1	—
	Newspapers	8	14	37
	Television	1	12	20
	Cable television	—	2	10
	Illegal cable TV	—	1	4
	Radio	4	4	5
	Magazines	3	3	5
	Friends and families	5	4	2
	Associations	—	2	—
	Air-dropped fliers	1	—	—
	Election Gazette	2	—	—
	Election forums	5	—	1
	Video tapes	—	3	—
	Audio tapes	—	1	—
	TV ads	—	4	1
	Newspaper ads	—	1	4
	BBS	—	1	1
	Call-in shows	—	—	5
	Internet	—	—	9

Note: Articles that dealt with political communication issues in other countries were dropped from the analyses. For media type, articles are categorized in all applicable categories.

An analysis of studies published during this period shows that a large number of these studies used content analysis, surveys, and experiments to examine specific research questions or hypotheses (see Table 3.1). Overall, the number of studies focusing on television as a political medium increased dramatically, while research interest in the effects of interpersonal communication declined. In addition, more research was conducted on the effects of new media such as political advertising, videotapes, and computer bulletin boards (Chang, 2004).

Media Sources 1987–1995: Shift in Power from Government to Public

The end of martial law also paved the way for the Taiwanese news media to cover issues in a more balanced way. Su (1995), for example, showed that different

newspapers not only used diverse sources in their coverage, but also varied in the tone of the coverage and in the number of anonymous sources used. Thus, rather than reporting unanimous political opinions or perspectives as it did before 1987, the press varied considerably in tone and perspective after 1987.

The credibility of the media among the public also was closely scrutinized. Lu (1992) found that high school students in Taipei perceived television to be a more credible news source than newspapers. Similarly, Pan, Wang, and Hxie (1990) asked adults in Taiwan to rank the credibility of newspapers, television, radio, magazines, and videotapes. The authors found that respondents perceived television as the most credible source, closely followed by newspapers. Peng (1991), on the other hand, interviewed 233 media owners and discovered that newspaper owners rated the credibility of newspapers higher than did television owners—and that the opposite was true for the perceived credibility of television news.

Media Content 1987–1995: Diversity in News Coverage and Campaigns

Researchers working during the postmartial law period also examined how the relaxed press restrictions affected news coverage in general. Pan and Bu (1990), for example, compared news coverage of seven major political issues before and after the lifting of martial law. As expected, their detailed analysis found that after martial law ended, news coverage become more negative, critical, and diversified. As a reaction to the growing competition of new media outlets on the Taiwanese news market, newspapers tended to adopt segmentation strategies rather than appeal to the masses. That is, the content of news coverage aligned more with the interests of the newspapers' target segments rather than with the population as a whole. In addition, the authors found that the post-1987 news coverage was more likely to include public opinion polls and comments by political opinion leaders.

A number of articles examined the portrayal of political candidates and the discussion of their political positions in the news media. Lin (1992), for example, conducted a content analysis of the newspaper coverage of Shao Kang Zhao, the most popular political candidate in the 1989 legislative election. The authors found that the newspapers depicted Zhao mostly as a charismatic front-runner and that his popularity stemmed at least partially from this positive coverage.

Content analyses of political advertising campaigns also were common during this period. Cheng (1993), for example, examined the use of party labels in printed political advertisements in the 1989 legislative election and in the 1991 people's representative election. Although candidates for the opposition party were more likely to use party labels, the use of these labels was not significantly associated with winning the election. Tang (1992) analyzed the televised political advertisements used in the 1989 election campaign and found that the ruling KMT party

emphasized "achievement" appeals by focusing on party accomplishments. In contrast, Wang and Chen's (1995) analysis of political advertisements used by the DPP, the leading opposition party in the 1992 legislative election, suggested that their advertising spots were aimed at undermining the political authority of the KMT. Similarly, Lin (1995) analyzed the values presented in the televised political advertisements used in 1991 and 1992 elections. The author found that while the incumbent party emphasized group norms in their advertisements, the opposition parties focused more on individual values.

Media Effects 1987–1995: New Media and Polls

Most empirical studies published between 1987 and 1995 focused on understanding the potential impact of political news coverage and campaign information on voters' attitudes toward the political candidates. Weng and Sun (1994), for example, examined how the use of various media could predict voting behavior in the 1993 election. They found that voters who chose candidates backed by the New Party (a new opposition party formed in 1993) had been exposed to more news than those who voted for candidates of the KMT or the DPP.

After 1987, new communication technologies became especially important vehicles for transmitting information critical of the government in Taiwan. Sun's (1995) survey conducted during the 1994 governor's election, for example, showed that people who voted for candidates of the opposition party (DPP) were more likely to have been exposed to new media such as call-in shows or computer bulletin boards.

Scholars also began to investigate the effectiveness of new campaigning vehicles. Cheng (1994) conducted a focus group discussion during the 1992 legislative election to explore the effectiveness of autobiographical-style political spots that featured the candidates' personal stories. He concluded that for this style of political advertising to be effective, it should feature the candidates' real families and friends—not actors, as has been done frequently. Cheng (1995) also studied college students' responses to televised debates in the 1994 Taipei mayoral election, analyzing the major themes, tactics, and appeals used by the three candidates. His findings indicate that attacks were evaluated more favorably than straightforward policy statements and that televised debates worked to the advantage of the political challengers.

Another important line of research was concerned with how public opinion might influence voter choices. However, while polls were beginning to play an important political role in Taiwan in the late 1980s, pollsters frequently faced difficulties when conducting surveys because many Taiwanese voters were still afraid of expressing their political views (Li & Chiou, 1990). Consequently, Li and Chiou (1990) compared different probing methods used by the polling centers of major newspapers. The authors found that indirect questions, such as "Who do you believe will win the election?" had greater predictive power than more direct questions, such as "Who will you vote for."

The Third Period 1996–2006

Early in this most recent period, the political opposition in Taiwan surged in strength, demanding more diversity and objectivity in news coverage from the mainstream media. The Taiwanese media complied, resulting in further stimulation of political debate and political pluralism. This accounted for at least some of the redistribution of political power to the opposition. However, political parties still needed to strategize and maneuver for their voices to be heard. Unmediated campaigning on Web sites and talk shows and in political advertisements offered the means to do so, and candidates took full advantage of them.

All six Taiwanese communication journals analyzed in this chapter published academic studies between 1996 and 2006. With more local publication outlets available, the number of political communication studies in Taiwan increased greatly, with empirical research accounting for roughly three-quarters of the studies reviewed from this period. As before, election studies dominated in this period, focusing on several political campaigns in Taiwan. Among them, the Taipei mayoral election of 1998 and the presidential elections of 1996 and 2000 drew the most research attention.

The spread of cable television and the rapid development of the Internet drastically changed the media environment between 1996 and 2006. A content analysis of published communication studies shows a growth in research about cable television (none before 1987, 10% of studies between 1987 and 1996, and 17% between 1996 and 2006) and the Internet (none before 1996, 15% between 1996 and 2006). Despite the expansion and importance of research on new media technologies, three-quarters of the studies still focused on newspapers (see Table 3.1). This might be explained by the fact that many Taiwanese scholars continue to believe that newspapers are an important source of political information and that analyzing newspaper content is easier and less expensive than analyzing televised or Internet-based news content.

Media Sources 1996–2006: From Direct Control to Strategic Maneuver

Much less research attention was paid to the sources of political communication between 1996 and 2006 than in the two preceding time periods. Instead, communication researchers tried to achieve a better understanding of how political candidates develop strategies to garner media coverage and thus exert control over the flow of political information. Fu (1996), for example, described how candidates coordinated activities and advanced issues to draw media attention and concluded that the winners of elections tended to coordinate a larger number of activities. Chen (2003) conducted a content analysis of candidate news releases and the resulting news coverage during the 2001 Taipei country magistrate election, finding a positive correlation between the content of the news releases and that of the news coverage.

Chuang (2000) found that, in the 1998 legislative election, candidates in urban areas were more likely to set up Web sites than those in rural areas, and that candidates backed by one of the two major parties, the KMT and the DPP, were more likely to use Web sites as campaign vehicles than were those backed by minor parties.

The fact that spontaneously emerging events during election campaigns can shed a negative light on a candidate's image or competency created the need among politicians to be able to strategically fend off any resulting criticism—or to direct attention to issues that promote more positive perceptions. Drawing upon the game theory framework, Chiang (1996) showed how candidates strategically used three controversial political events during the 1994 Taipei mayoral campaign to demonstrate their own strengths and attack their competitors' weaknesses.

Other studies analyzed the strategies employed by political figures in their public speeches. For example, Wang (2004) applied the rhetoric criticism approach to analyzing how the vice president, Annette Lu, defended herself in public when her integrity was under attack.

Media Content 1996–2006: Analyses of Campaign Coverage in Modern Taiwan

People in Taiwan have long been divided over the issue of Taiwan's independence or a possible unification with China. The threat of missile attacks from China in 1996 and the shift of power from the KMT to the DPP in 2000 only deepened these divisions. The Taiwanese mass media, of course, mirrored this split in public opinion.

A number of recent content analyses have focused on the potential bias in the news coverage of Taiwan's independence. Chang (1997), for example, found that media coverage of Taiwan's independence—an important campaign issue in most Taiwanese elections—became more diversified in the 1989 Taipei county election and in the 1992 and 1996 legislative elections. Similarly, Hsu's (2001) content analysis of three leading Taiwanese newspapers before the 2000 presidential election suggests that the relationship between China and Taiwan received more coverage as the election approached.

Hsia (2003) conducted a textual analysis of news coverage of the "2-28 Event," which involved the violent suppression of an antigovernment demonstration on February 28, 1947. The demonstration was triggered by the murder of a Taiwanese woman by a policeman from China for selling smuggled cigarettes. Riots erupted throughout Taiwan with thousands of demonstrators either arrested or killed by the mainland-established KMT government. For decades, the 2-28 Event was an issue that people did not talk about publicly for fear of being jailed or otherwise punished. After martial law was lifted in 1987, however, the 2-28 Event was widely discussed among the public and in the media. Hsia's (2003)

56-year analysis clearly illustrates how the news coverage of this issue shifted with the prevailing political climate. Overall, only 14 news stories about the 2-28 Event appeared in the martial law period (1947–1987), whereas in the much shorter postmartial law period (1987–2000), the coverage of the event skyrocketed to 1,379 stories.

Political call-in programs gained popularity in the late 1990s and became one of the most watched program types during prime time in Taiwan (Sheng, 2005). Yang (2004) analyzed the content of the most popular political call-in program, "Speaking Your Mind at 2100," and concluded that the program was more a stage for showcasing politicians than a platform for the public to express and exchange opinions. Sheng (2005) found that campaign issues were more likely than public policies to be discussed in the call-in programs.

Communication scholars also have monitored potential biases in the news coverage of recent election campaigns. Lo, Jin, Chen, and Huang (1995), for example, conducted a content analysis of the television news coverage of the 1996 presidential election and found favorably biased coverage of the incumbent candidate by state-owned broadcast television stations but more balanced coverage by privately owned cable stations. Similarly, Lo and Huang (2000) found more bias in state-owned newspapers than in privately owned newspapers in terms of the amount and tone of the coverage of the 2000 presidential campaign. Finally, a content analysis of news broadcasts during the 1992 legislative election campaign in Taiwan indicated that news stories contained more sound bites when they covered candidates backed by the ruling party than when they covered those backed by the opposition (King, 1996).

In addition, a number of studies examined media portrayals of political candidates and their campaign strategies. Kuo and Wang (2001), for example, found that in the 2000 presidential election, major Taiwanese newspapers generally gave more positive coverage to the spouses of candidates they favored. Cheng (1997) analyzed the content of news releases by political candidates in the 1996 election and found that KMT and New Party candidates focused on attacking opponents, whereas DPP candidates focused more on promoting issues and building their images.

Researchers have also analyzed message strategies in newspaper political advertisements. Chou's (1997) content analysis of the newspaper advertisements used in the 1995 legislative election demonstrated the wide use of emotional appeals. He also found that the use of other forms of appeals (issue, fear, celebrity, and attack) changed as a function of a candidate's party alignment. For example, candidates backed by the opposition party, the DPP, used more fear appeals and celebrity endorsements than those backed by the KMT. Cheng's (1996) analysis of newspaper advertisements in the same campaign showed that ruling party candidates relied on attacks, whereas opposition party candidates were more likely to promote their positions on issues or their past achievements.

Political campaign Web sites became important sources of information for

voters, which, in turn, encouraged researchers to examine their content and strategies. Peng (2000), for example, analyzed the features presented in candidates' Web sites in the 1998 Taipei mayoral election. The author found that the Web site of the incumbent, Shuei-bian Chen, featured a greater variety of content and interactive devices than those of his two challengers. Chen's Web sites also attracted more visitors than those of his challengers. In a similar vein, Wang (2003) found that candidate Web sites during the 2000 election campaign focused on providing voters with access to political content, whereas Web sites used in the 2002 campaign allowed for greater levels of interaction between candidates and voters. Chuang (2005) analyzed KMT's online campaigning strategies in the 2004 presidential election. Hong (2001), on the other hand, found that during the 2000 election voters rated the Web sites of the challengers higher on user friendliness and information utility than those of the incumbents.

Media Effects 1996–2006: Selective Exposure and Media Diversity

The number of studies focusing on media use and effects increased dramatically between 1996 and 2006. Moreover, with the introduction of innovative media strategies in Taiwan's most recent elections, voters were now able to access political information from a variety of new media sources, such as call-in television and radio shows and the Internet. As a result, a number of studies investigated the use and effects of these new political sources.

Sun's (1996) face-to-face interviews with voters shortly after the 1996 presidential election, for example, revealed that media use varied greatly depending on which candidate the respondents supported. Supporters of challengers relied more on new types of media, such as call-in radio and computer bulletin boards, than did supporters of the incumbent. Based on a national telephone survey conducted during the 2000 presidential election, Peng (2001) found that exposure to television call-in shows predicted less voting support for Zhan Lian, the KMT candidate, whereas exposure to radio call-in shows predicted less support for Shuei-bian Chen, the DPP candidate and incumbent. Peng (2001) also found that, among the various media, only exposure to television call-in shows and televised forums were positively associated with participation in typical election-related activities, such as donating money to candidates or wearing campaign buttons.

Research also showed that the mass media helped voters to remember the names of candidates and to become more aware of campaign issues. Sun (1997) found that exposure to television news and street advertisements improved voters' recall of candidates' names, whereas exposure to political advertisements in newspapers primarily improved knowledge of campaign issues. Similarly, Hsiao's (1999b) survey of college students in the 1998 Taipei mayoral election revealed students with greater media exposure were more aware of the main campaign issues.

In addition to exerting an influence on campaign knowledge, political news in Taiwan also generated some classic agenda-setting effects. In studies of the 1995 Taipei mayoral election, for example, researchers found that the media images of political candidates strongly correlated with voters' perceptions of candidate images (King, 1997; Li & King, 1996). Chen (2004), however, found that the convergence between media portrayals and public perception was greater for political challengers than for the incumbents. Chang (1999a) exposed voters during the 1997 Taipei county magistrate election campaign to six different political ads, two for each of the three candidates, featuring different issue policies. She found that the more frequently an issue was featured in the political ads, the more important the voters rated each issue. In addition, the respondents rated the importance of the issues higher when the political ads were sponsored by a preferred candidate.

As media coverage of elections in Taiwan became increasingly negative, researchers became interested in the effects of negative news. Analyzing campaign news and opinion polls in the 2000 presidential election, Chen (2001) found that negative news increased as Election Day approached. In addition, more negative front-page news coverage was associated with less political support for one of the three presidential candidates. In a later study, Chen (2002) exposed Taiwanese college students to positive and negative campaign news for fictitious candidates, finding that greater exposure to negative campaign news was associated with higher levels of political cynicism.

Taiwanese researchers also investigated the impact of political advertisements on voters' preferences for certain political candidates. Hsiao (1999a), for example, examined how college students responded to a humorous political advertisement for the DPP candidate, Shuei-bian Chen, in the 1998 Taipei mayoral election. As expected, her study showed those who supported Chen found the ads more humorous than those who supported his opponents. In another study, Chang (1999b) examined whether the effects of the same advertisements varied for candidates of different genders in the 1997 Taipei county magistrate election. She found that, regardless of the advertising messages used, voters clearly engaged in schematic gender processing. As a result, they rated the female candidates to be more capable of dealing with women's issues than the male candidates. Conversely, male candidates were perceived to be more capable of dealing with men's issues than the female candidates.

Less attention has been given to the political effects of media exposure in non-election settings. A survey of Taiwanese college freshmen found that exposure to television news enhanced the richness and completeness of the students' party schemata, with those viewing more such news reporting a higher level of thinking about the major political parties (King & Shen, 1998). Liu (1997) found that exposure to newspaper and television news increased the perceived importance of the 1996 Taiwan National Development Conference among college students, and that the perceived importance was positively associated with attitudes toward the event.

Recent research has also explored the relationship between media use and political participation and trust (Chang, 2007; Chen & Lo, 2006; Peng, 2004). Chen and Lo (2006), for example, found that exposure to hard news increased political participation, while Chang (2007) found that the more time individuals spent on the Internet for pleasure, the lower their political participation.

As in other nations, the way news is presented in the Taiwanese media strongly affects people's interpretations of political issues. Chen (2003) found that reading strategy-framed news about a typhoon that hit Taiwan in 2001 resulted in more negative evaluations of government officials who responded to the disaster than reading issue-framed news of the same event. Another framing study explored the impact of news coverage of the construction of a nuclear power plant in Taiwan, finding that exposure to news coverage encouraged the public to use news framing to interpret the issue, which, consequently, led to more favorable attitudes toward building the plant (Huang, 2003).

Conclusions

The central finding of this review is that the changing political context in Taiwan has dramatically influenced political communication research in this young democracy. As described at the outset, political communication in Taiwan can be divided into three unique stages marked by the lifting of martial law in 1987 and the first popular vote for president in 1996. Differences in the locus of political power and in media proliferation characterize the three periods, and are reflected in the political communication research conducted in each period.

Under martial law, government propaganda dominated all forms of political communication in Taiwan and press freedom was subordinated to national security. As a result, political communication flowed mainly from the government to the media then from the media to the public. The rescission of martial law in 1987, however, gave the media and the people more power in the political communication process. Since the 1996 presidential election, winning the attention of the voters and the mass media has become a key concern for all political candidates.

Political communication research played different roles and focused on different issues in each of the three periods. During the first period, media scholars could do little other than discuss the types of political communication taking place in other countries, hoping that Taiwan eventually would develop into a democratic society. During the second period, political communication researchers put their efforts into reporting on the broadening of news coverage and campaign strategies resulting from the end of martial law and the loosening of campaign restrictions. In the third period, researchers increasingly examined the campaign strategies of political candidates and the effects of campaigning on political outcomes.

Despite the lifting of martial law in 1987 and the shift in power from the KMT to the DPP in 2000, Taiwan remains divided over the issue of indepen-

dence versus unification, a split that is reflected in political communication. For example, during the second period when the KMT still ruled, new media served as important communication outlets for supporters of Taiwan's independence. In the third period, when the opposition candidate, Shuei-bian Chen, was elected president, biases in media coverage remained—not because of government control but rather the ideological preferences of the news organizations themselves. Overall, however, this ideological division encouraged public debate on controversial issues and intensified both the competitiveness of and information flow in the electoral process. As a result, media coverage of controversial issues such as the 2-28 Event and Taiwan's independence has become more diverse.

The development of new media also transformed the political communication process in Taiwan. During the first period, newspapers were the most important source of political information. Consequently, the government's control over newspapers provided a powerful tool for shaping how people understood and interpreted critical political issues. In the second and third periods, however, the introduction of new media challenged the government's control over political information. For example, the new media allowed very personalized strategies for specific voter segments, a change that mostly benefited campaign planners. However, the changes that were ushered in by the new media also meant that more integrated campaign strategies became necessary to set the political agenda for the media and the public.

Overall, there are several key differences between Western research on political communication and the literature found in Taiwan. First, although research can follow empirical, interpretative, or critical paradigms, the majority of the research in Taiwan has been primarily empirical. As politics in Taiwan is full of symbolic communication, there is plenty of material for interpretive analyses. Thus more research from the interpretive and critical perspectives is encouraged.

Second, there is a lack of research in Taiwan on the development of public policies and political issues in the media. Although elections have taken center stage in the two most recent periods, Taiwanese society is divided on many controversial and critical issues that are major themes in elections, but are also salient issues in nonelection periods. As a result, it is also important to investigate how parties and politicians shape media coverage of major public issues in nonelection periods. In addition, researchers should examine how other sociotropic issues develop in the media, how the public forms opinions based on media content and their own experiences, and how their opinions further shape the direction in which these issues develop.

Finally, a majority of political communication research in Taiwan has developed in the absence of a solid theoretical framework. In fact, it is rather uncommon for political communication scholars in Taiwan to formulate and test new theories. Moreover, only a few media studies have challenged established Western theories or tried to extend them. Communication research in Taiwan in general, and political communication in particular, frequently have been criticized for these theoretical shortcomings (Lo, 2000; Chang, 2004).

This author believes that it is crucial to develop new theories that take into account the unique cultural and political context of Taiwan. Ironically, although Taiwan's political context is unique, political communication research still struggles under the strong weight of Western research models, especially those formulated in the United States. Consequently, the questions we ask and the topics we explore mirror those of Western scholars.

The Americanization of political communication can be attributed to two factors. First, because most Taiwanese communication scholars have been trained in the United States, they naturally adopt Western perspectives. Indeed, a recent survey of full-time journalism and communication professors working in four-year colleges and universities in Taiwan revealed that 82% of the respondents had received their most advanced educational degrees from a university in the United States (Wang & Lo, 2000). Second, the history of political communication research in Taiwan is quite short and the cumulative evidence is insufficient for fully understanding political communication processes in Taiwan. This is reflected in the paucity of political communication studies found in the leading media journals in the 40-year period covered here. Thus, only a more mature Taiwanese research community will be able to develop local perspectives that can be integrated into the existing model of Western media effect theories.

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Chapter 4

Media Management and Political Communication in Singapore

Terence Lee and Lars Willnat

Contextualizing Singapore

Since independence from British rule in 1965, the political system in Singapore has been shaped by the rule of Senior Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his close associates in the People's Action Party (PAP). Convinced that a purely Western model of democracy would lead to ethnic conflict and social unrest in Singapore's multicultural society, the government has consistently maintained that only a strong and united government can provide the leadership and policies to secure progress and prosperity in the city-state (Vasil, 2004). In addition, the ruling PAP claims that Singapore's racial and religious diversity make it necessary to limit the democratic rights and freedoms of Singaporeans—especially during elections, when there is heightened political activity and emotion (Singh, 1992; Vasil, 2004).

While the fear of ethnic conflict has been used as an argument to limit the role of democracy in Singapore, it is important to realize that elections in Singapore are not held to determine who is to rule the country, but "to bring together in the institution a body consisting of the most gifted, innovative, well-educated and experienced men and women, who can offer Singapore a good, achievement-oriented and effective government" (Vasil, 2004, p. 110). It is also a mechanism for the government to ensure that "irresponsible populist demagogues and adversarial politicians who have little compunction in inciting racial and religious hatred, confrontation and conflict for political gains are kept out of parliament as far as possible" (Vasil, 2004, p. 110). Thus, unlike in liberal democracies, elections in Singapore are not contests of alternative policies and programs offered by competing political parties, a view underscored by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew when he declared that:

> There just is no viable alternative program for an island city state other than what we have empirically worked out in the last 30 years. That is why the able and the talented have not come forward to form a credible alternative team and challenge the PAP. They know PAP is doing the right thing. They are content to thrive and prosper with the present men in charge. (cited in Vasil, 2004, p. 110)

Singapore's economic and social achievements have given the PAP a high level of credibility and legitimacy, and it is no surprise that a large majority of Singaporeans have come to accept the PAP's right to act as custodian of the nation. As a result, while most Singaporeans wish for a stronger opposition in the parliament, few of them have genuinely pushed for an alternative government (Singh, 1992; Vasil, 2004). Hence all opposition parties since independence have been extremely weak and fragmented, and consequently, attracted limited public support (Vasil, 2004). The PAP's efforts to portray opposition parties as deflections of national development and progress also have helped to diminish public support (Singh, 1992). In fact, many Singaporeans have been led to believe that opposition leaders are irresponsible opportunists, or lightweights with flawed characters, who lack the credibility and skills to manage a modern Singapore (da Cunha, 1997; Vasil, 2004). Such tactics, of course, have come under fire from opinion leaders and representatives from opposition parties who blame the ruling party for their failure to be seriously considered by the electorate. They maintain that the PAP government's brand of authoritarianism has made it impossible for them to function politically because of repressive policies and restrictions it imposes on them and on the media (Singh, 1992; Vasil, 2004).

In their extensive study on *Singapore Politics under the People's Action Party*, Mauzy and Milne (2002) identify a range of "draconian laws" and restrictions that determine Singapore's status as an authoritarian state. Laws such as the infamous Internal Security Act, instituted during British rule to counter Communist insurgents and used by the PAP to detain political opponents, and the Societies Act of 1967, which requires most organizations of more than 10 people to be registered, are commonly cited by Singapore observers as authoritarian and politically motivated. In addition, many believe that Singapore's judicial system is politically compliant, despite its high international ratings for efficiency, innovation, and fairness. However, very few, if any, would publicly articulate such sentiments for fear of being arraigned on charges of libel or defamation.

The PAP government's inherent hostility toward opposition parties is illustrated by their strict control of all forms of mass media, which has enabled them to execute effective propaganda against its political opponents (Gomez, 2000; Singh, 1992). Moreover, the PAP's monopolistic control has not only resulted in direct censorship but subsequently created a culture of self-censorship among media practitioners who, in their role as gatekeepers of information to the public, manage and control the coverage opposition parties receive (Gomez, 2000; Seow, 1998). For example, political parties find it difficult to secure advertisements for their publications from would-be advertisers. Most potential sponsors fear that their business would suffer if they took out an advertisement in an opposition newspaper or even publicly exposed their sympathy for the opposition cause (Gomez, 2001).

While Singapore's political and legal structures are worthy of further research, this chapter focuses on another aspect of Singapore's authoritarianism: the political control of the media. We seek to identify the tactics and strategies employed

by the Singapore government to manage the media's ability to engage in political communication, which McNair (1995) describes as "purposeful communication about politics" (p. 4). With this broad and inclusive definition of political communication, which effectively links the study of the media with politics, the section that follows will provide a summary of recent research on political communication in Singapore and will consider why there is a perpetual dearth of critical studies on this subject. The chapter will then look at the mechanisms of media control in Singapore, both in the traditional and digital media environment.

Political Communication Research In Singapore

As in many other Asian nations, the number of political communication studies in Singapore is limited due to a relatively small research community and a political system that does not encourage critical analysis of political discourse. Some media scholars argue that this rather substantial lack of political communication research in Asia has also resulted in theoretical approaches and ways of understanding that are biased toward a Western perspective. Kluver (2004a), for example, argues that:

> [T]he paucity of literature on Asian experiences and frameworks means that most of the theory-building that happens within the field of political communication is derivative from the Western experience, which presumes that the Western model of politics and communication is or should be normative for the rest of the world. This lack of critical engagement with other global perspectives establishes a *de facto* situation in which only Western theories, Western experiences, and Western contexts are used to generate analysis. (p. 118)

Kluver's advice about the need for non-Western perspectives is worth considering, but its application is problematic in the case of Singapore because, as in all aspects of everyday life in Singapore, the media have been turned into "depoliticized" entities (Mauzy & Milne, 2002). In other words, the media's role is primarily to inform, educate, and entertain Singaporeans for the purposes of "nation building," while staying more or less clear of sensitive political issues (Birch, 1993; Tan, 1990). This entrenched view of Singapore's media as apolitical is a direct result of Lee Kuan Yew's disdain for the Western model of the media as the Fourth Estate. As Lee himself made clear in 1971, "politics are only for professional politicians, and no person or group of persons, organizations or associations may comment on national policies without first joining or forming a political party" (cited in Seow, 1998, p. 27). The government, with the relatively recent addition of the elected presidency in Singapore, thus becomes the only institution in Singapore that is permitted to express opinions on national politics (George, 2002).

Within the framework of political communication studies, Singapore's media

are positioned as a neutral and morally correct information-provider for the Singaporean public (Birch, 1993). Consequently, political communication in Singapore is often seen as nothing more than official government communication to the public on its own prescribed terms (Maarek, 2003). This position is, of course, naïve and ignores the fact that there is resistance and opposition to the status quo in Singapore.

As one might suspect, the forced rejection of the democratic role of the media in Singapore has severe implications for academic research on political communication. Kuo (1991), for example, notes that "communication research in Singapore has been carried out by researchers from various academic backgrounds without the support of a strong institutional base, and without an established research tradition" (p. 120). This in turn has led to a dominance of descriptive rather than theoretical or critical studies that are typically conducted on ad hoc bases, resulting in research that "is lagging both in quality and quantity" (p. 121). It is fairly obvious that political communication research in Singapore has been suppressed by the government's tight social and political controls during the past decades, and the fact that the parameters for acceptable political debates (known in Singapore as "out-of-bounds markers") have been shrouded in ambiguity. Thus, it is no surprise that very few academics dare to test the boundaries of political deliberation in Singapore (Lee, 2005a).

One of the first critical studies of political communication in Singapore is Birch's (1993) seminal monograph *Singapore Media: Communication Strategies and Practices*, which identified Singapore's media strategies and policies as a "measured ideological framework of a domestic and regional postcolonial politics of nation-building" (1993, p. vii). In the following years, Singapore's communication policies usually were discussed with reference to a specific medium, particularly the press (George, 2002; Rodan, 2000; Sim, 2006) and the Internet (George, 2003, 2005; Gomez, 2002; Lee, 2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005c; Rodan, 2003; Sussman, 2003). These studies concentrate on particular aspects of media regulation, such as censorship (Gomez, 2000; Yeo & Mahizhnan, 1998), ownership and political control (Rodan, 2000, 2004), and the state of Singapore's civil society as reflected in the media (George & Pillay, 1998; Lee, 2005c; Rodan, 2000, 2004).

The official adoption of the Development Press model by the Singapore government in the 1990s allowed media researchers to conduct a number of carefully phrased studies focusing on press performance. Based on a content analysis of letters to the editor in the national newspaper *The Straits Times*, Ramaprasad and Ong (1990), for example, conclude that "the salience of the national development themes seems to have been successfully transferred by government into the minds of the people and publishers" (p. 53). The study points out, however, that in contrast to the demands of the traditional development press model, some of the letters, although focusing on development issues, were rather critical in tone.

In fact, these letters to the editor have since become the de facto site for public feedback and limited political discussion in Singapore (Lee, 2005a).

Similarly, Choi's (1999) content analysis of news coverage of juvenile delinquency examines how Singapore's newspapers were able to maintain a limited sense of independence while adhering to their official nation-building role throughout the 1990s. The study documents how especially the Chinese-language newspapers in Singapore play a nation-building role by propagating public campaigns initiated and managed by the government, while other newspapers simply cover cases of juvenile delinquency or remain neutral.

The indirect and often self-imposed controls found in the Singapore press also have been the focus of a recent framing analysis of political news in *The Straits Times* (Sim, 2006). Based on a content analysis of news about the government's official vision for Singapore in the 21st century (promoted as "Singapore 21"), Sim (2006) concludes that political news in Singapore is often depoliticized with human-interest frames that allow the media to cover controversial issues without contradicting the ideological dominance of the one-party government. Thus, "by accepting the PAP's perspective of what the question is (what Singaporeans need to do, rather what the government needs to do), journalists' complicit use of personalizing frames sufficiently filters out anti-government articulations, without the PAP having to intervene coercively" (Sim, 2006, p. 589).

The first truly empirical political communication study conducted in Singapore, however, is Kuo, Holaday, and Peck's (1993) analysis of the role the media played during the 1991 General Election. The study, which is based on interviews with 435 randomly selected Singaporeans, found that the electorate relied heavily on the mass media for information about the election but perceived the election coverage to have low credibility and to be skewed heavily toward the ruling party. The authors showed, for example, that 59% of the election stories presented in the television newscasts were about the ruling PAP, while only 34.5% were about any of the opposition parties. Moreover, PAP stories were usually produced with additional event footage and prerecorded comments from journalists describing the event, while news stories about the opposition parties were much simpler, often limited to single continuous shots of the candidates. Likewise, the PAP received the largest number of items in the newspapers with 34.7% of election-related articles reported, as compared to the 16.9% news about opposition parties.

Similarly, Hao's (1996) analysis of data obtained in a telephone poll of 570 randomly selected Singaporeans found that although respondents were basically satisfied with the overall performance of the local press, they also questioned the media's credibility, especially with regard to news coverage on domestic politics and government affairs (see also Tan, 1990). Hao warns that an increasingly younger, better educated, and critical public might eventually begin to question the fundamental credibility of Singapore's press, a development that has been, at least partially, defused due to the emergence of the Internet as an alternative news source.

In recent years, a growing number of studies focusing on the relationship between media and public opinion in Singapore have emerged. Chang (1999), for example, examined the form and content of public opinion reporting in Singapore's news media to determine their social implications for public policy decision making. The findings show that "public opinion surveys in Singapore are fraught with theoretical and methodological problems and that their reporting in the news media leaves much to be desired" (p. 11). The author pointedly concludes that the frequent but incompetent reporting of public opinion polls in Singapore's media might lead to the illusion of a responsive government and political complacency in the public.

One of the first empirical studies of media effects on public opinion was conducted by Gunther and Ang (1996), who examined the influence of third-person perceptions on public support for television censorship in Singapore. Data for this study came from face-to-face interviews with 506 randomly selected Singaporeans who evaluated 10 categories of "sensitive" television content. As expected, the authors found a substantial perceptual bias in all content categories (people feeling that "sensitive" television content influenced others more negatively than themselves), which, in turn, correlated strongly with opinions favoring censorship of television content. Gunther and Ang concluded that the relationship between these two factors suggests that people support media censorship in part because they tend to overestimate its negative influence.

Another study about the potential relationship between media use and public opinion formation by Willnat, Lee, and Detenber (2002) provides partial support for the spiral of silence theory in Singapore. Based on telephone interviews with 668 randomly selected Singaporeans, the study tests the hypothesis that political outspokenness is largely a function of people's perception of the dominant opinion climate, their perceived importance of critical public affairs issues, and other psychological predispositions. As predicted, respondents who perceived a trend in public opinion that was in opposition to their own beliefs—and who considered the public affairs issue important—were less likely to express their opinions on these issues in public. The study also shows that political outspokenness in Singapore is associated with respondents' self-concept of interdependence, fear of social isolation, and general communication apprehension.

A similar, comparative study by Lee, Detenber, Willnat, Aday, and Graf (2004) found partial support for the spiral of silence theory in Singapore but not in the United States. Based on two identical telephone polls conducted among adults in Singapore and Washington, D.C., the authors examined the influence of collectivism, fear of isolation, and communication apprehension on respondents' willingness to discuss the controversial issues of interracial marriage and equal rights for homosexuals in public. Similar to the findings in the earlier study, respondents' perception of the future opinion climate in Singapore interacted with issue salience to influence their level of outspokenness. However, this effect could not be replicated in the American sample. Despite this cross-cultural support for the spiral of silence, respondents' outspokenness in both countries

was associated with the perceived importance of the two issues and communication apprehension.

While the spiral of silence theory has attracted considerable attention among media scholars in Singapore, other possible interactions between media use and public opinion have been tested as well. In an experimental study of public opinion about state-sanctioned gambling in Singapore, for example, Chia, Yong, Wong, and Koh (2007) tested the hostile media effect, which is based on the common tendency among partisans on opposing sides of a controversial issue to perceive the same news coverage as biased against their own viewpoints. As predicted, the authors found that partisans (supporters or opponents of gambling) perceived news about the construction of a new casino in Singapore to be in favor of the other side, while nonpartisans (those who neither opposed nor supported gambling) perceived the same news to be neutral. This finding supports the idea that partisanship is a prerequisite for hostile media perception, even in a highly restricted press system such as the one found in Singapore.

Overall, the political communication studies discussed here clearly suggest that Singapore's media have an impact on public opinion and are therefore tightly controlled by the government. Various reasons have been cited for placing the media on a tight leash, but they generally point to the desire and the professed need by the PAP government to manipulate and control social consciousness. As Birch (1993, p. 74) notes, "all societies and cultures do this to some extent. What makes Singapore different from most is that it admits to what it is doing, and legitimates it within a postcolonial discourse of nation-building." The next section expands on this line of thought by considering how exactly such control is achieved in Singapore.

Singapore's Mediascape: Management and Control

In 1996, the well-known anthropologist Arjun Appadurai coined the term *mediascape* as one of five dimensional "scapes" intended to explicate differences and disjunctures in the global cultural economy. According to Appadurai (1996, p. 35), the term refers to the production and dissemination of mediated information via traditional and electronic means to form political and ideological "images of the world."

Singapore's mediascape operates in much the same manner in that management and control of the mass media are intended to keep the government in absolute power and control. According to McNair (1995), this mode of political communication can be understood as "media management," where governments seek to "control, manipulate or influence media organizations in ways which correspond to their political objectives" (p. 135). This section provides an abbreviated background of Singapore's media and suggests how the exercise of media management in Singapore has been mostly successful due to a combination of regulatory instruments and strategies of co-optation and autoregulation (Lee, 2002, 2005b; Rodan, 2003, 2004).

Singapore's mediascape can be divided into three broad categories: broadcast media, print media, and the Internet. All three categories are required to serve as handmaidens to the nation's economic development effort. Until 1980, the government controlled and maintained all television and radio stations through the official Singapore Radio and Television department. This department was then turned into a statutory body, the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, before it was incorporated in 1994 as Singapore International Media (SIM) (Ang, 2000). SIM is a private company wholly owned by the government through its state investment agency Temasek Holdings. To improve SIM's opportunities for competition in the domestic and global media industries, the company was subsequently restructured and renamed as the Media Corporation of Singapore (MediaCorp).

At first glance, Singapore appears to house a thriving local print media environment with strong circulation numbers for English- and Chinese-language newspapers and a relatively vibrant press aimed at the Malaysian and Indian minorities (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002). However, a pattern of mergers and politically motivated closures of various newspaper companies, which began in the mid-1980s, has resulted not only in fewer mainstream newspapers (as compared to the 1970s and 1980s), but also in the formation of Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), essentially a government-linked print media monopoly.

Although the creation of the SPH through mergers was seen as commercially successful, it led to a reduction in alternative voices and venues as domestic news about Singaporean political affairs became more and more centralized and mainstreamed. In an article which proposes an interesting delineation of the mass media in Singapore as either "mainstream" or "marginal," former *Straits Times* journalist Cherian George (2002) describes Singapore's media as one that facilitates "the government's freedom from the press" (p. 175) as opposed to the democratic model of freedom of the press from government.

Singapore's government is able to achieve this "freedom" through a variety of legal and regulatory controls, which are invoked frequently to bring local editors and journalists to task. These controls include, among other things, licenses to publish newspapers, the aforementioned Internal Security Act, and the Official Secrets Act, which deters journalists from being on the receiving end of political leaks. As a consequence, journalists and news editors in Singapore are mindful of the inherent risks of their trade as they go about their daily work.

The key legislation governing the print media is the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act (NPPA). Enacted in 1974, and amended several times thereafter to tighten its juridical reach, the NPPA empowers the government to determine the composition of a newspaper company's board of directors. With the NPPA's structure and mechanism in place, George (2002) argues that "the government needs neither to post its officials directly into top newsroom positions, not to nationalize the press" (p. 177). Instead, the control of the press is much more subtle as it relies on a combination of political co-optation and autoregulation, both of which have been tried and tested, and found to work very effectively

in Singapore (Rodan, 1996; Lee, 2005b). While the former aims to win over formidable and outspoken critics by roping them into the "inner circle" of political management, the latter seeks to regulate and police criticisms by ensuring that they are articulated via government-mediated channels or are preemptively quashed even before they are raised (Lee, 2005b; Rodan, 1996). In the case of the press, George (2002) notes that:

> Contrary to folklore, the newsroom does not receive daily instructions about what to publish, and sensitive articles are not submitted to government officials for vetting. Like all major newsmakers, government officials try to influence coverage of their particular portfolios through a mix of persuasive tactics, from offering the inducement of greater access to dangling the veiled threat of legal action.… The most senior figures in the leadership prefer to have editors who *independently* come to the right conclusions—even if they occasionally do not—than to replace them with mere functionaries. As members of the establishment, newspaper editors are expected to have an instinctive grasp of Singapore's national interests and how to protect them. (pp. 177–178; emphasis in original)

While the invocation of "national interest" is a common strategy for contemporary media management and control, Singapore's approach is extremely ingenious as it utilizes a potent combination of legislative and autoregulatory mechanisms. This ideology of control has been the main force behind the government's control of the mass media since Singapore's independence in 1965.

Singaporean political gatekeepers have long been wary of foreign media, even paranoid about them, and international broadcasters engaging in Singapore's domestic politics. Media censorship laws, particularly those relating to foreign publications and screen products, were enacted and regularly amended to control the inflow of negative foreign social, cultural, and political influences (Seow, 1998). In July 1986, for example, the NPPA was amended to enable to government to restrict sales of foreign publications deemed to be interfering with domestic politics (George, 2002). Following the passage of this law, many foreign media were held responsible for their reports of unsavory aspects of the PAP system (Chee, 2001). Foreign publications falling victim to this aspect of the law include the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The Economist*, *The Asian Wall Street Journal,* and *Asiaweek* (Seow, 1998). In addition, since the late 1970s, global media publications including *Newsweek*, Reuters, *The Times* (London), *The Star* (Malaysia), *Time*, and *International Herald Tribune* have had their editors or journalists arraigned on charges of publishing defamatory or libelous articles (Lee, 2005b).

The spirit of the NPPA's systematic muzzling of the foreign media was extended to the global broadcast media in April 2001. In an amendment to the Singapore Broadcasting Authority Act (2001), and subsequently superseded by the Media Development Authority Act from 2002, foreign broadcasters and providers of

television news (such as BBC, CNN, and CNBC Asia) that are found to meddle in domestic politics can face complete termination of their services or restrictions on the number of households they can serve through the monopoly television cable provider Starhub Cable Vision. Since most of the international media organizations operating in Singapore enjoy sizable profits, they all have learned to avoid commenting or, indeed, communicating about Singapore's domestic politics (Lee, 2002).

Although the introduction of legislations and penalties has seriously eroded both the domestic and international media's ability to comment freely on Singapore politics, a stable hegemonic state–media relationship has evolved over the years. The local print and broadcast media are best described as prodevelopment and hence progovernment in the name of national security and public interest. As such, their role and credibility have been so compromised in the eyes of the public that many locals have come to identify the mass media with the ruling party (Kuo et al., 1993). Yet, despite a clear lack of political debate in the mass media, Singapore harbors the ambition of becoming the global media city of the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century (Leo & Lee, 2004).

In April 2000, Singapore experimented with limited media liberalization when it introduced competition between the two core local print (SPH) and broadcast media (MediaCorp) players by allowing both companies to cross into each other's turf. That year, SPH became a two-channel broadcaster while MediaCorp ventured into newspaper publishing. This move to liberalize the media was done in part to support Singapore's "creative industries" and to prepare the media sector for global expansion. It was recognized that the economic framework of Singapore's media sector had to shift away from a monopolistic structure—at least in appearance—in order for the rest of the world to take its ambitions for becoming a global media city seriously (Leo & Lee, 2004).

However, the plan to inject soft competition was a financial failure as well as a public relations disaster. In November 2003, after substantial losses among both media players, the government decided that media liberalization in Singapore had failed and that a duopolistic set-up was more realistic for Singapore (Lee, 2003). Although both SPH and MediaCorp dismissed the possibility of a merger, it was publicly announced in September 2004 that television and newspaper operations in Singapore would be rationalized in a move "to stem losses and enhance shareholder value" (Chua, 2004, p. 1). Under the so-called merger agreement, MediaCorp regained its monopoly on broadcasting under a new entity called MediaCorp TV Holdings, which now included a 20% SPH ownership stake. While SPH was allowed to continue publication of its tabloid *Streats*, the daily operation of the newspaper was taken over by MediaCorp Press, jointly owned by SPH (40%) and MediaCorp (60%). Although the current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong dismissed suggestions that the government had orchestrated this quasi-merger, calling it an "adjustment" to the market situation (Teo, 2004), the preordained outcome was clearly intended to reaffirm a duopolistic media structure in Singapore.

In sum, the traditional media outlets in Singapore are guided by two government-owned or controlled media heavyweights: SPH in the print media and MediaCorp in the broadcast media. They exist alongside a wide array of global media publications and broadcasts that give the impression that Singapore is an open and vibrant society. The reality, however, is that while this model of media management served the PAP government well by limiting political expression in Singapore, it severely blunted the ability of the domestic media to compete beyond the confines of Singapore.

The question that remains is whether political communication has been or can be more meaningful on the Internet, especially given that this relatively new medium is widely regarded as the most democratic and autonomous space available for political expression (Vedel, 2003). The following section explores this possibility and considers whether the Internet has the potential to alter Singapore's political communication landscape.

The Internet's Place in Political Communication

In 1992, the Singapore government proclaimed that Singapore would become the first "intelligent island-state" of the Asia-Pacific region by the year 2000 (Lee, 2002). Today, with 99% of households and businesses connected to a nationwide broadband network and about 66% of the population having access to the Internet at home, Singaporeans are considered more tech-savvy than Americans, Britons, or Australians (Lee, 2002, 2005b). With relatively fewer regulatory restraints compared to traditional media, the openness of the Internet has enabled individuals and groups to set up Web sites and Web logs (or blogs) to publicize and communicate their own interests and agendas. This unprecedented shift in media use has also led to an increase in the number of alternative online media available in Singapore (George, 2002).

The beginnings of public online communication in Singapore can be traced to www.soc.culture.singapore, an online forum that surfaced in 1994 as the first nongovernmental Internet site dedicated to open discussions of Singapore politics and current affairs. While this forum pioneered the idea of online communication in Singapore, it was the launch of the Singapore Internet Community (Sintercom) Web site in October 1994 that truly popularized online discussions as an alternative to the government-controlled mass media in Singapore. Sintercom carried a wide array of "contentious" journalistic reports, including a summary of hot political topics extracted from the www.soc.culture.singapore forum. The site also carried an electronic bulletin board to garner feedback from readers and published letters to the editor that had either been rejected or strategically edited by *The Straits Times*. Sintercom soon became the "beacon of civil society" (Lee, 2005c) by allowing ordinary citizens to test political boundaries and circumvent both legal and sociocultural obstacles in a tightly controlled society (George, 2002).

Encouraged by Sintercom's success in countering the PAP's monopoly of media bandwidth, political parties soon adopted the Internet as an alternative communication tool. The opposition National Solidarity Party was the first to launch a political party Web site in 1995 (Seah, 2001). In response to this, the PAP developed a "Young PAP Web site" where young PAP members were given the opportunity to discuss PAP policies and related issues on a Web-based discussion board (Gomez, 2002). According to the Young PAP ("Our vision," 2007), the official goal of such a discussion forum is to "help the PAP maintain its position as the mainstream political party of Singapore, by expressing the aspirations of young Singaporeans, and by recruiting supporters, members and leaders for the Party from among young Singaporeans." It is interesting to note that all major political parties in Singapore launched their official Web sites only shortly before the 2001 general election, obviously under the impression that the Internet is relatively unimportant as a political campaign tool (Gomez, 2002).

Kluver's (2004b) content analysis of political party Web sites during the 2001 Singapore general election shows that only four out of 21 political parties in Singapore actually maintained Web sites and that "most of them did not make use of features and content explicitly allowed by the Parliamentary Elections Act Amendment, such as candidate biographies, frequent updates, moderated forums, and multimedia content" (p. 449). Moreover, only a few Web sites offered interactive features such as discussion forums, opportunities for active participation and volunteering, and e-mail addresses to which voters could send their views and comments. Kluver (2004b) concludes that "in contrast to a perceived global trend toward the 'Internet-ization' of politics, the 2001 Singapore general election demonstrated that in spite of an advanced technological infrastructure, elections are still won and lost offline" (p. 455).

A more recent analysis of the hyperlink patterns that connect political Web sites in Singapore by Soon and Kluver (2007) found that the groupings formed by political groups in cyberspace resemble those of online communities. Mutual hyperlinks were found primarily between those Web sites that belong to political groups with similar ideological backgrounds. The authors conclude that these online connections might allow opposition parties to organize and advance their agendas through the Internet in ways that otherwise would be impossible due to the various restrictions political groups face in Singapore.

The potential use of the Internet for alternative discourse, political communication, and campaigning, however, was neutralized by a series of legislations and self-regulatory codes aimed at controlling or limiting the political use of the Internet. Ironically, the innovativeness and the initial success of alternative Web sites like Sintercom also turned them into regulatory guinea pigs that could be observed by the government and then evaluated as a potential threat that could result from an un(der)regulated Internet (Lee, 2005c). As early as 1996, the Singapore authorities introduced regulatory guidelines to ensure that online "prohibited material"—defined as "material that is objectionable on the grounds of public interest, public morality, public order, public security, national harmony, or is

otherwise prohibited by applicable Singapore laws"—was minimized or restricted (Lee, 2002, p. 11; Sussman, 2003, p. 46). Although such a definition of prohibited material clearly leaves room for discretionary interpretation and should have been queried by the public, there was barely any discussion about this issue in Singapore. Instead, the move that sparked widespread interest was a decision made in 1997 to block 100 pornographic sites by Internet service providers in Singapore (Lee, 2002, 2003, 2005b). To quell public disquiet, the government stressed that Singapore was fundamentally "technology-friendly," and that the online censorship was a moral gesture and not politically motivated (Lee, 2005c).

The government's attempt to exercise political control over Internet content was unmistakable when it passed further regulations that required content providers with political messages or political advertising to register with the Internet regulator, the Media Development Authority (MDA) (George, 2002; Sussman, 2003). Sintercom managed to sidestep this directive by convincing the authorities that it was not a political site, but a civic organization. But in July 2001, notice was issued to Sintercom's founder Tan Chong Kee to register as a site "engaged in the propagation, promotion or discussion of political issues relating to Singapore" (Goh, 2001). Tan responded by announcing that the arbitrariness of regulatory terms, especially in the definition of "political issues," meant that he had no choice but to shut down. He then lamented that civil society in Singapore was a "lost cause" (Tan, 2001).

Determined to control online materials, especially those that could spark antigovernment sentiments, the government passed new antielectioneering laws prior to the 2001 general elections (Tan, 2003). As a preemptive measure, new communication tools like short messaging services over mobile phones were also outlawed (Lee, 2002). Political parties, candidates standing for election, and nonparty political Web sites were required to be registered with the MDA and had to observe the Internet campaigning rules in accordance with the 2001 Parliamentary Elections Act (PEA) and the 2001 Parliamentary Elections Regulations.

The Parliamentary Election Act (2001) states that although private sites are not allowed to support any party or candidate, the Web sites of political parties are allowed to post their manifestos, posters, candidate profiles and photos, newsletters, event announcements, advertisements to recruit volunteers, political party supporters or newsletter subscribers, and to hold online discussions and forums (Singapore Elections Department, 2001). However, parties must appoint moderators for chat rooms and discussion forums during the election and keep logs of all messages (Tsang, 2001a). These moderators are also to regulate and remove any messages that are deemed to be against public interest, public order, or national harmony, or which offend good taste or decency (Tsang, 2001a). Any other Internet campaigning materials such as transaction services, announcements or notices referring to the sale of political merchandise and other fundraising activities are restricted (Singapore Elections Department, 2001). The publication of opinion polls during election and exit polls during polling day are also forbidden under the bill (Tan, 2001).

While these regulations may seem highly restrictive, the Media Development Authority insists that they do not precensor content of political sites since its sole objective is to ensure that those who run Web sites and engage in the discussion of domestic politics will be accountable and responsible for that content (Tsang, 2001b). This position was met with protests by some content managers, owners, and editors of online forums and Web sites who were now accountable for libelous information posted on their sites—even if such posts were from anonymous contributors (Gomez, 2002). As Sussman explains, this "wide range of laws proscribing speech is intentionally vague so as to have the most chilling effect on political discussion held outside the gates of PAP-controlled channels" (2003, p. 46).

In addition to the above regulatory measures, the government has also authorized the Singapore police and other state agencies to conduct regular checks on ISP accounts of public users. Since 1994, the year the Internet was introduced to the Singaporean public, several reports of police conducting mass scanning of subscribers' e-mails and Internet accounts have appeared in *The Straits Times* (Lee, 2002). Although official explanations for these clandestine activities typically pertain to law enforcement and technical or systems security, the fear that Internet snooping and general surveillance are common in Singapore makes it necessary for all Singaporeans, including journalists and civil society activists, to toe the official line by self-regulating and self-censoring (Gomez, 2000).

There is little doubt that regulatory measures, combined with policing actions that could be construed as tools for social and political intimidation, have worked to rein in oppositional political discourses in the media. Although the Singapore government has a reputation for periodically refining media regulations to suit its own political agenda, and thus keep civil society and political communication under tight strictures (Rodan, 2001), alternative Web sites dedicated to critical political engagements continue to appear—and even flourish—on the Internet. Alternative Web sites that have continued to survive despite ongoing political pressures include *New Sintercom*, *Think Centre*, *Singapore Window*, *TalkingCock.com*, and *Sammyboy*. Although Tan (2003) criticizes the lack of analytical content and journalistic professionalism on most of these Web sites, he acknowledges their growing popularity and potential impact on the media and civil society when he notes that: "Some [commentaries and writings] are ludicrous, but many are also intelligent and serious, evidently not just the musings of bored undergraduate geeks with no social life but people who seem to know what they are talking about" (p. 15).

It is important to realize that many of these alternative Web sites continue to exist for various reasons. Most claim to promote civil society in Singapore, though some are overtly politically motivated, while others appear to serve as conduits for candid sociopolitical discussions. Nevertheless, most editors protect themselves by operating under the cloak of anonymity, and many of these sites "inhabit a nebulous region of cyberspace without a fixed location" to avoid falling foul of Singapore laws (Tan, 2001, p. 15). Indeed, none of the alternative

sites referenced in this chapter have the geographical "sg" suffix in their Internet addresses. Although it is technically possible for the authorities to track down the identities of operators of these sites and shut them down, such draconian measures are unlikely as they would damage the government's technology-friendly reputation, and flout its promise to regulate the Internet with a light touch.

While the authorities will continue to make it difficult for alternative Web sites to function by maintaining a tense climate of fear and by continuing to enact new laws, codes, and guidelines, it is likely that the Internet will remain the prime site for democratic articulations and political communication in Singapore simply because it is by far the most malleable of communication mediums to date. The battle over the shape, form, and place of the Internet for political communication in Singapore would thus continue to be fought in the foreseeable future.

Conclusions

As globalization and advances in communication technologies take center stage, political communication in Singapore will inevitably be reshaped by new ways of interacting. The entry of the Internet, new telecommunication devices, and services such as video conferencing and wireless computing have given Singaporeans a much greater selection of communication options and the power to interact affordably and easily—despite often tight controls of the mass media. Coupled with the increase in literacy and education level (da Cunha, 1997), the state of political communication in Singapore may be set to change as a growing number of young and educated people become more outspoken. In recent years, for example, there has been a more apparent debate on a range of political and social issues which have translated into an increase in the number of opposition votes during elections (Vasil, 2004). Furthermore, as technological innovation and creativity become essential components of the future global economy, Singapore's government may be pressured to widen the margins of political participation and communication.

It is important to remember, though, that technology itself has no strategic value in terms of expanding political participation if there are only limited opportunities for people to use and promote these technologies for democratic purposes. Ironically, although Singapore has one of the highest Internet penetration rates in the world, many people are uncomfortable using it for political ends (Gomez, 2002; Sussman, 2003). As such, even if new communication technologies might provide a panacea for altering the nation's consensual and submissive political culture, its potential among the wider society could still be muted by deeply entrenched political beliefs and a conservative value system (Ibrahim, 2004; Kuo, Choi, Mahizan, Lee, & Soh, 2002).

However, the key question is whether Singapore's government can continue to ignore the growing vocal minority and maintain its heavily regulated stance on technology to secure its mandate to govern (da Cunha, 1997). Perhaps the

idealism and empathy of the political opposition will reshape the future of political communication in Singapore, encouraging the people to clamor for more spaces of political articulation and push for a greater degree of political empowerment.

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Chapter 5

Political Communication in Indonesia

Media Performance in Three Eras

Effendi Gazali, Dedy Nur Hidayat, and Victor Menayang

This chapter examines political communication research in Indonesia during three political periods: (1) President Suharto's authoritarian regime, which lasted from 1967 to 1998; (2) the downfall of Suharto's regime during the May Revolution in 1998; and (3) the reform era, which began in 1998 and became internationally known as *reformasi*. In addition, the chapter will briefly address the role of the mass media in Indonesia's 2004 general election.

As in other countries, communication scholars in Indonesia have continually struggled to establish their own boundaries and methods in order to be acknowledged as a scientific field (Dahlan, 1990). They also have struggled to establish university departments in the social and political sciences. For example, among the 48 main universities in Indonesia, only 13 have an undergraduate communication program, compared to the 39 that offer programs in management (PPSPMB [Central Committee for Selection of News Students], 2003). A special forum for scholars of communication and politics would help accelerate development of the political communication field, but none is yet in place (Ryfe, 2001). Neither the Association of Indonesian Communication Scholars nor the Association of Indonesian Political Scholars has divisions for political communication.

To examine the scope and characteristics of political communication research in Indonesia during the three periods, we use a theoretical model (see Figure 5.1, page 120) that depicts the interactions between the media, the government, the economy, and civil society (Bardoel & d'Haenens, 2004; Hidayat & Sendjaja, 2002; McQuail, 1992). We will describe the interactions between these four components of the model in each era and relate them to research topics within each period. The political communication studies on which this chapter is based were collected and evaluated by social science, political science, and communication faculty at the four main state universities in Indonesia: the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, the Padajajaran University in Bandung, the Gajah Mada University in Yogyakarta, and the Airlangga University in Surabaya. Except for two minitheses that were relevant for the discussion section, the data include primarily research conducted at the doctoral and master's level.

Indonesia Under the Suharto Regime

President Suharto came to power in 1967 after ousting Soekarno, whose policies left the country with a negative growth rate, 600% inflation, and a national debt of over US$2 billion (Vatikiotis, 1994). To deal with these problems, Suharto's new administration created a series of political mechanisms to achieve political and economic stability (Mas'oed, 1989; Moertopo, 1974). Suharto's regime (also known as the "New Order Regime") succeeded in transforming Indonesia from what has been characterized as "the number one economic failure among the major underdeveloped countries" to an economy that was a model of third world development (Higgins, 1968, p. 678). As a result, between 1969 and 1994, Indonesia's GNP expanded by an average of 6.8% annually. Such achievements led the World Bank in 1993 to recognize Indonesia as one of the high-performing economies responsible for the "East Asian miracle of rapid growth and declining inequality" (World Bank, 1993, pp. 1–3).

In practice, this economic success depended heavily on a systematic and comprehensive strategy, which ensured that the Indonesian government was able to control the distribution of power between the various political parties and the parliament. In 1973, the ruling Golkar (*Golongan Karya*) party forced all other parties to merge into two opposition parties—the Indonesian Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* [PDI]) and the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* [PPP]). The government then developed an election format designed to ensure and demonstrate the absolute power of Golkar (Haris, 2004). As a result, the parliaments elected during Suharto's regime did not function as legislative bodies promoting the will of the people, or as a "check and balance" mechanism for the executive branch.

The Media Under Suharto

The Indonesian mass media have been primarily shaped by the dynamics of Suharto's market economy. The rapid economic growth under Suharto's rule created a new middle class with relatively high education and income levels, giving the media an audience with great purchasing power. Thus, the economic expansion led to the growth of an advertising industry in Indonesia. In addition, the Indonesian media industry was able to increase profits by selling foreign advertising agencies access to Indonesian audiences.

The media environment under Suharto was also marked by a transformation of the Indonesian press from a political press to an industrial press. During Soekarno's administration, the press was defined as a "tool of the revolution," responsible for mobilizing public opinion (Hill, 1994, p. 14). As a consequence, most of the press aligned their editorial policies with specific parties and politicized segments of the population. In contrast, under the Suharto regime, most media catered to a broad readership spread across social, cultural, and political

sectors. The larger circulation, which in turn resulted in more advertising revenue, became possible after canceling the requirement for Indonesian newspapers to affiliate with a political party or mass organization of their choice.

However, Suharto always defined the media as a "partner in development." While pursuing commercial success, the Indonesian media were declared "free but responsible," in contrast to the presumed irresponsibility of the liberal Western media. This policy affected almost all aspects of the functioning of the Indonesian media. The government controlled the ownership of media institutions by issuing printing licenses, which later became licenses for publishing print media. These licenses were issued primarily on the basis of political criteria. Indonesian journalists were required to join an official journalists' organization and all chief editors had to attend courses on state ideology. In addition, the Ministry of Information closely monitored and censored the production of news, forbade press coverage of opposition leaders, and even controlled paper supplies (Gazali, 2002; Hidayat, Gazali, Suwardi, & Ishadi, 2000).

In the broadcasting sector, the government controlled the appointment of journalists and managers in the government-owned Radio of the Republic of Indonesia (RRI) and Television of the Republic of Indonesia (TVRI). In 1970, commercial radio stations began operating in many large cities in Indonesia, usually run by supporters of the regime or local government members. The first commercial broadcast TV stations, on the other hand, emerged in the 1990s but were run by companies that were owned and controlled by Suharto's family members and allies (d'Haenens, Verelst, & Gazali, 2000). The commercial radio and television stations in Indonesia were not allowed to produce their own news programming, but instead had to rebroadcast the news from the official government-owned stations (Gazali & Menayang, 2002).

In line with the goal of a more open economy, an "open sky policy" was announced by the regime in the 1990s, allowing domestic companies to distribute foreign television broadcasts. The government also opened the media sector to foreign investment and majority ownership in 1994. However, Indonesia's Minister of Information, Harmoko, sharply criticized these liberalizations, saying that they contradicted the 1966 Press Act, which prohibited any kind of foreign investment in the press industry. Harmoko, who owns the second largest daily newspaper in Indonesia and is a significant shareholder in various other print media, declared that irrespective of the regulation, he had Suharto's full support in keeping foreign investment out of the Indonesian press industry.

Freedom of the Press under Suharto

The power to grant media licenses was a formidable tool for the government to use to control dissenting views and promote Suharto's interests. During the 1970s, a large number of governmental crackdowns on the press occurred, which culminated in two cases of mass media bans. The first occurred in January 1974, when 13 newspapers and news magazines were shut down for their coverage of

student demonstrations and riots in major Indonesian cities. A second series of media bans took place in 1978, when further antigovernment student protests led to the closure of seven Jakarta dailies and seven student newspapers. The media bans were preceded by the disbanding of all student councils in Indonesia, the arrest of some 200 students, and the military occupation of several key campuses in Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta. However, unlike in 1974, when the media bans were permanent, in 1978, except for some of the student newspapers, all of the banned publications were back on the streets within weeks.

In addition to the large-scale media bans of 1974 and 1978, there were also some sporadic bans of individual publications in later years. In April 1981, for example, the economic journal *Jurnal Ekuin* was shut down after it reported an imminent reduction in the government's price for oil exports. Similarly, in October 1986, the newspaper *Sinar Harapan* had its publication permit withdrawn for commentaries on the Suharto regime's economic policies. In June 1994, in the midst of increasing public demand for more democracy and press freedom, the major weekly magazines *Tempo, DeTik*, and *Editor* were closed down for pursuing a political conflict between two Indonesian ministers over the purchase of 39 warships that had belonged to the East German navy.

In some situations, however, the limits on what could be published were ill-defined or a function of Suharto's "ideological maturation." For instance, in 1983 the news magazine *Ekspo* lost its publication permit for publishing a report on "Indonesia's 100 millionaires," a list that included an embarrassingly large number of Suharto's family members and cronies. However, when Suharto's attitudes toward capitalism matured in the 1990s and it was no longer embarrassing to be exceptionally rich, such listings became common in the Indonesian media.

This political tolerance did not extend to the issue of *Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar Golongan* (SARA), a well-known acronym that stands for "Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Groups with differing affiliations and backgrounds." During Suharto's reign, the government did not allow the media to openly discuss anything related to SARA. The main reason for the censorship was that all elements of society were supposed to uphold the nation's principle of "Diversity in Unity" (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*). For the media, this meant that all social and cultural differences should be swept under the carpet—only "national unity" was to be promoted. The government used this policy to control opposing political views that usually came from radical indigenous or Muslim groups. Any such views were quickly labeled as SARA conflicts, generally by announcing that there was unwanted conflict between the indigenous people and those of Chinese descent, or between Muslims and Christians (Dhakidae, 2003; Hefner, 2000).

In addition to the forced dependence on government-owned media, Indonesian journalists had to rely on their skill to report politically sensitive news that both maximized advertising sales and minimized the risk of losing the publication license. According to one senior journalist, this meant that editors had to develop "sensitivity to the government's approval and disapproval conveyed through an intricate and culturally conditioned network of subtle gestures and

signals," while remaining sensitive to the market's demand for critical reporting (Makarim, 1978, p. 279).

Such a constraining media structure produced a type of journalism that was very cautious, self-censoring, and avoidant of direct criticism. The chief editor of the banned *Indonesia Raya*, for example, described this journalism as "very subtle allusions to avoid hurting anyone's feelings, having to be like a snake, circling round and round without ever striking the target" (Lubis, as cited in Hill, 1994, p. 47). As a consequence, headlines never focused on negatives, criticisms were rarely written in the active voice, and the circumlocutory passive speech disguised disapproval (Hill, 1994).

Media Research under Suharto

This section reviews political communication research carried out at four main universities in Indonesia between 1984 and 1998, the year Suharto was forced to resign. Between 1966 and 1998, the Suharto regime (also known as the "New Order Regime") ensured that the political and communication systems functioned as a government controlled instrument (Gazali, 2002; Haris, 2004; Hidayat et al., 2000). All plans for research had to be submitted for approval to several government offices, which ensured that no research interests posed a threat to the political stability. Due to the political constraints on research under Suharto, it is not surprising that most of the political communication studies conducted during this time in Indonesia fall into the categories of "administrative" or "industry" research (Dhakidae, 2003; Smythe & Dinh, 1983).

In fact, Dahlan (1990) noted an aversion on the part of Indonesian communication scholars to conduct political communication research under Suharto, except for descriptive or normative studies of government-approved issues such as the "New World Information Order" or Indonesia's official policy of *Pancasila* (Five Pillars Ideology). This sensitivity to critical media research in Indonesia forced communication scholars to conduct studies that were safe and could not be used against them. For example, when Indonesia scholars analyzed press freedom, they examined the foreign press rather than the Indonesian press, thus avoiding a discussion of Suharto's preventive and coercive controls over the Indonesian press.

The repressive atmosphere for media research under Suharto is reflected in Table 5.1, which shows a significant increase in quantity and variety of research interest after Suharto's resignation. While most of the research under Suharto can be categorized as "administrative research," approximately 20% of the research conducted during *reformasi* falls under the category of critical studies. This is in line with Menayang's (2003) analyses, which show that during the final years of the Suharto regime there was a growing interest in communication research that questioned the ruling power in Indonesia and analyzed audience resistance to government-controlled media.

Table 5.1 Political Communication Research in Indonesia Since 1984

Category	*Research Interest*	*1984–April 1998*	*May 1998*	*After May 1998*
Democratic Media System	Media law & press freedom	7		10
	Structure of media industry & power relations	2	1	5
	Citizen as active information gatherers & processors			2
	Diversity of media types, ownership & content			1
	Access to, & freedom of, alternative media	1	1	1
Media Roles, Media Uses & Effects	Media effects on political opinions, attitudes, beliefs	6		7
	Effects of media agenda on audience agenda	3		5
	Media roles	2		3
	Media & content choices			2
Media Reality Construction	Media portrayal of certain issues	5		7
	Newsroom analysis	2	4	4
Political Processes & Interaction Among Interest Groups	Elections & campaigns	3		7
	Governmental institutions & processes	3	1	3
	Political conflicts with violence & terrorism	2		5
	Local politics & autonomy	2		4
	Presidential political messages	2		4
	Political leadership	2		3
	Gender in politics	2		3
	Political socialization	2		2
	Political communication in development	2		
	Political communication management			2
	Former forbidden (taboo) concepts in politics			1
	Money politics			1
Other	Religious issues	4		8
	Ethnicity issues	2		4
	Political communication in arts/cartoons/ movies	1		2
	Political rumors		1	
Total		55	8	96

Note: The research period refers to the time when the event or case examined took place.

Scholars who have analyzed the situation of the Indonesian press under Suharto tend to blame journalists and the media for its weak role during the repressive regime. For instance, Nasir (1996) concludes that the Indonesian press tended to empathetically "understand" the government's behaviors rather than to critically question them. He also notes that this problem might have been caused by a lack of solidarity within the media itself and lack of support from the public.

Media researchers have also noted that government and business interests exerted a huge influence over the Indonesian press. A study conducted by Taufik (2002), for example, showed that the Bakrie Group, a large Indonesian media conglomerate, was granted a publishing license in return for positive coverage of government policies and a substantial bribe paid to government officials in charge of media licensing. Similarly, in a comparative content analysis of the news coverage of the Gulf War in the *New York Times* and the Indonesian newspaper *Kompas* between 1990 and 1991, Soesilo and Wasburn (1994) concluded that *Kompas* was ideologically committed to acting as a "developmental press"; that is, a press that supports the social and economic needs of the nation and gives priority to governmental news and information. This conclusion confirmed McCargo's (1999) findings that much of the Indonesian press was engaged in uncritical "development journalism," which favored the authorities and served primarily as an agent of social and political stability.

Almost all Indonesian studies that analyzed media effects on political opinions, attitudes, and perceptions employed quantitative methods. Such studies examined, for example, how media exposure influenced students' perceptions of human rights in Indonesia, and how exposés by local newspapers affected the attitudes of local government officials. One unique study by Djaja (1990) examined the effect of television on the political socialization of Indonesians living in Medan. This group of people not only had access to Indonesian television stations from Jakarta and Medan, but also was able to receive the spillover broadcasts from three Malaysian television stations. Djaja (1990) found that people living in Medan primarily watched Malaysian television for entertainment and information unrelated to politics. As expected, the Malaysian television programs therefore did not increase interest in Malaysian politics or political involvement in the local government or community.

In the 1990s, a number of media studies emerged that investigated the relationship between religion and political communication. Most studies examined the ways in which political figures or issues were portrayed in the media that were affiliated with certain religions in Indonesia. A study by Semma (1998), for example, examined how the daily newspapers *Kompas* (Catholic), *Suara Pembaruan* (Protestant), and *Republika* (Muslim) portrayed sectarian tension among Christians and Muslims in East Timor (September 1995) and Situbondo (October 1996). The study combined a content analysis with in-depth interviews with the editors of the three newspapers. The author found that all three newspapers basically communicated the same message—the sectarian conflicts should not

have happened. However, *Kompas* and *Suara Pembaruan* paid much more attention to the Situbondo case, defending the position of the Christian residents. In contrast, *Republika* paid much more attention to the East Timor case, defending the interests of the Muslim residents.

The only dissertation in our collection of studies that deals with media-related political issues during the Suharto regime is Suwardi's (1993) content analysis of symbols and messages used in 10 Indonesian newspapers during the 1987 election campaign. Suwardi, who is now recognized as one of the foremost political communication experts in Indonesia, concludes that the 10 newspapers were not able to carry any substantial political messages during the 1987 election campaign. Instead, they focused primarily on political figures and only carried political slogans and superficial on-the-spot reports, thereby failing as a forum for political education. Despite Suwardi's (1993) finding that the Indonesian press favored the ruling Golkar party during the 1987 election campaign, he never suggested any reforms that could provide more balanced media coverage in future elections.

A later study by Lesmana (1997) analyzed the news coverage of an attack on the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party in Jakarta in 1996. The attack, which was carried out by members of the Indonesia armed forces and vigilantes allegedly under orders of the Suharto regime, was aimed at supporters of Megawati Soekarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first president and a rising political star. By comparing the coverage of the attack in the Indonesia news magazine *Gatra* to news published in the Indonesian online news magazine *Tempo Interaktif*, Lesmana (1997) was able to show that the online magazine was much more transparent in its reports than the printed news magazine. Moreover, *Gatra* claimed to present its news as a "neutral partner" of the government, and any criticism of the regime's violence was couched in feeble terms. The findings also showed that *Tempo Interaktif* relied mostly on nongovernment sources and focused on the political and social aspects of this attack. *Gatra*, on the other hand, used the Indonesian army as its main source and emphasized the legal aspects of this rather bloody event.

Overall, it is clear that the government dominated the Indonesian economy, civil society, and the mass media during the Suharto regime (see Figure 5.1A). Then again, the government and the business community in Indonesia also had overlapping interests. While the government received guarantees from the media owners that their actions would follow the official line, Suharto's loyalists were granted media licenses and gained access to Indonesia's lucrative and growing media market.

The Media and the May 1998 Revolution

At a first glance, Indonesia's May 1998 revolution, which led to Suharto's resignation, might be attributed to the combined forces of the media. Most analysts believe, however, that the main cause of the 1998 democracy movement was the

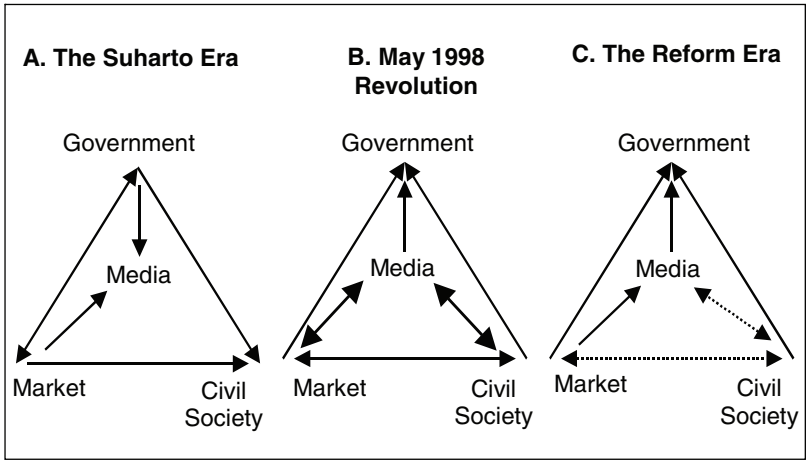

Figure 5.1 Model of State–Market–Civil Society—Media interactions as an analytical tool for describing the functioning of media in political communication.

Asian economic crisis that struck Indonesia in 1997 and 1998 (Basri & Iswara, 2000).

In early 1998, mounting economic and political crises as well as public demonstrations began to influence the relations between the government, the media, and the people. At first, the newsroom personnel at major television stations were surprised that the ratings for television news programs increased significantly and equaled those of popular entertainment programs. The fear that this trend could lead to government restrictions was countered by concerns among television executives and journalists that limited reporting of the democracy movement might lead to a loss of viewers and advertising revenue. As a result, the media began to challenge their long-time loyalty to the government. According to an analysis by Ishadi (2002), by mid-May 1998, almost all journalists and editors in Indonesia had abandoned their loyalties to the government and begun to play a leading role in the advancement of the May 1998 revolution.

On May 12, 1998, the democracy movement suddenly accelerated and the government violently quelled a student demonstration at Trisakti University in West Jakarta. Unidentified police and troops killed four students and injured many more. This brutal action provoked mass riots, looting, rapes, and burnings of cars and shops in Jakarta and several other cities.

According to Tobing (2000), the government tried to control television news by briefing journalists and editors up until May 16, 1998. The government also stipulated that opposition figures could only be interviewed if they did not provoke people, but no specific guidelines were given. Almard (1999) notes that on May 12, 1998, the day a number of students were killed at Trisakti University, open arguments between media owners, the management, and journalists took

place in the newsrooms of Indonesia's government-controlled media. The decision to present all events without any expression of support for the students and the activist movement, however, was undermined during the following days when journalists and editors gradually began to show their support for the democracy movement in their reporting. Finally, on May 18, students and other activists entered the Parliament compound and forced the legislators to ask Suharto to step down. These findings mostly contradict Ishadi's (2002) theory that television newsroom personnel played a leading role in driving the May 1998 revolution to its culmination. It seems therefore rather unlikely that the media initiated the political transitions that led to Suharto's resignation. Instead, it is more likely that the media merely played a supporting role in the democratic revolution of 1998 (McCargo, 1999).

While most of the traditional print and broadcast media waited until they could not avoid reporting the revolution, rumors and news about the uprising circulated through the Internet, the underground student media, and other nongovernmental media organizations sympathetic to the democracy movement (Winters, 2002). Hidayat et al. (2000), for example, showed that rumors about 76-year-old President Suharto's possible illness, which were spread partly through the underground media, sent the Jakarta Stock Exchange plunging 20% in mid-December 1997. The resulting collapse of the Indonesian Rupiah, not only prompted many of Jakarta's citizens to move their savings into U.S. dollars but also caused an unprecedented buying spree, which emptied most supermarket shelves of basic commodities (Hidayat, 2002).

According to Menayang et al. (2002), the emerging underground student media gained resonance among the public as a social movement, particularly in the months that preceded Suharto's downfall. His research provides two explanations for the relatively large influence of Indonesia's underground media: First, toward the end of the Suharto regime, the underground press undermined the importance of the traditional media by carrying similar news content and news frames. Second, there was no significant difference in the ideology of those who worked for the official media and those who worked for the underground press. While the grievances were the same for both groups, the underground media took action but the traditional media did not. Moreover, as Winter (2002) has pointed out, the

> …combination of an activist tradition among youth in Indonesia and high levels of internet penetration among the same segment of Indonesian society provided a particularly potent political mixture for mounting a sustained and coordinated reformist movement in the late 1990s. Although fractured in many ways, the Indonesian student movement made excellent use of a wide range of information sources and technologies for analysis, networking and coordination. The explosion of political activism fueled by the internet and global media coverage caught the Suharto regime off guard. (p. 118)

In conclusion, the May 1998 revolution exemplifies how the combined forces of civil society and a faltering economy can undermine governmental control in astonishing ways (see Figure 5.1B). The collapse of the Suharto regime was clearly the product of internal contradictions within the political, economic, and mass media structures. On the one hand, Suharto integrated Indonesia's economy more deeply with the global market economy in order to strengthen it. This was strategically significant for the regime's survival, as economic prosperity was its main source of political legitimacy. On the other hand, the economy's links to global markets made the regime more vulnerable to external pressures and changes (de Koning, cited in Hidayat, 2002). However, while Suharto's resignation undoubtedly was accelerated by Indonesia's faltering economy, alternative media sources found on the Internet and in underground student media helped to undermine the regime.

Indonesia During the Reform Era

The end of the Suharto regime in 1998 promised to create a new democratic atmosphere in Indonesia that would allow more press freedom and an uninhibited growth of political communication practice and research. *Reformasi* became the political buzzword of the post-Suharto era. The subsequent administrations in Indonesia—under massive internal and external pressures for reform—gradually freed society, the economy, and the media from government interventions. The Indonesia economy was increasingly liberalized through a series of "jungle clearing operations" in order to end a web of politically well-connected business privileges and monopolies that had surrounded Suharto's inner circle. Indonesia's newly liberated society also expressed itself in the rise of nongovernmental organizations, advocacy groups, social and cultural organizations, independent labor unions, a more autonomous press council, and some 40 newly established journalist associations. Unfortunately, this political freedom also allowed the emergence of dangerous and violent hate groups in Indonesia, which caused a drastic rise in violence (Chambers & Kopstein, 2001; Tadjoeddin, 2002).

Within the media, the liberalization process included a series of deregulations, and more importantly, the dissolution of the Information Ministry. The Information Ministry was a central feature of Suharto's authoritarian administration and was responsible for a long record of press bans. A year after Suharto's resignation, the House of Representatives passed a liberating Press Law that, among other things, eliminated licensing requirements, revoked the government's ability to ban publications, guaranteed freedom of the press, and even imposed a two-year prison penalty on "anyone who acts against the law by deliberately taking actions which could obstruct the work of the press."

Since a publishing license was no longer required, it is estimated that after Suharto's resignation in 1998, the number of newspapers soared from 300 to around 1,000, and the number of radio stations increased from 700 to more than

1,000 (Mangahas, 2001, cited in Johannen & Gomez, 2001). The new law also permitted foreigners to own up to 49% of the shares in any Indonesian media organization. Thus, Indonesia's media sector was finally free to disseminate political information and function as a venue for the discussion of political issues.

The liberalization also created fierce competition in the media for advertising sales and audience ratings. In the newspaper sector, for example, it is estimated that out of 1,000 newspapers that emerged in 1998, only about 700 were still in business at the end of 1999. Of these, only about 15% were believed to be in good shape financially (Alliance of Independent Journalists, 2000).

Media Research During the Reform Era

The fall of the Suharto regime not only resulted in a democratic government but also in a stronger and more assertive civil society. As a result, old racial, ethnic, and class related animosities, most of which had been buried for many years, reemerged during *reformasi*. This situation was made worse by a growing commercial and partisan press, which focused on conflict and sensationalism in Indonesia.

A number of Indonesian media scholars echoed these concerns over social and cultural conflicts that might have been fanned by sensationalistic media reports. A study by Paidi (2002), for example, examined the level of press freedom among local newspapers published in Jayapura, the capital city of West Papua (see category 1 in Table 5.1). This province, together with Aceh and Maluku, has long been recognized for its calls for secession from Indonesia. Paidi's research found that most Papuans seek news items from local newspapers about Papuan succession, and that these news items were more common in the newspapers published in Jayapura during the Reform era than during the Suharto regime. According to these findings, local newspapers deliberately selected and emphasized news items about secession. The study concluded that greater press freedom was very beneficial to the West Papuan local press; however, these freedoms also might threaten the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia.

Rusadi's dissertation (2002) examined the structure of the Indonesian media industry by analyzing the coverage of various riots in the three daily newspapers, *Kompas, Media Indonesia*, and *Republika*. The author found that the newspapers polarized these riots by portraying them as power conflicts between majority and minority religions, between supporters and opponents of the government, between the state and the public, between the upper class and the lower class, and between the military and civilians. Rusadi (2002) argues that these conflicts were intentionally portrayed as large social confrontations in order to sell more newspapers.

Similarly, Harahap (2000) examined how several Jakarta-based media portrayed the activities of agricultural organizations. The study found that in nearly all news stories, the farmers and their organizations were covered only during

violent actions, such as staging protests by blocking roads and forcefully entering land under dispute. In contrast, the violence committed by other parties, such as the military's shootings of farmers, seemed to be regarded as a procedural misconduct or as acts of self-defense.

The coverage of religious issues has also been studied extensively. A study by Zen (2001), for example, employs critical discourse and framing analysis to explore the historical contexts of political communication and the conflict within the largest Muslim group in Indonesia, the Nahdlalul Ulama (NU). It also compares the everyday lives of members of this community with the way they were portrayed in several Indonesian media. The findings show that, in general, the media pictured the NU members as feudalistic, primitive, village dwellers. The study confirmed that the feudalistic practices attributed by the media to this community troubled NU members themselves, especially the younger generation. In addition, every time the NU held its traditional religious meeting (*Istighotsah*), the media portrayed the meeting not as a religious ritual, but as a political forum for NU leaders. Despite the fact that the NU had already vowed not to get involved in politics, Zen found that the media tended to interview only prominent NU representatives who were politically active in the National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*).

The number of gender studies also increased during *reformasi*. Atmonobudi's (2004) dissertation, for example, discussed the implications of gender in political perceptions. While other research projects examined how the media portray women's careers or women's opinions in the context of Indonesia's patriarchal society, this study critically examined the ways in which middle-class housewives in Indonesia assigned meaning to the political career of President Megawati. The results were then compared with the content of news stories in *Kompas* that focused on the appropriateness of Megawati becoming Indonesia's first female president. The study focused on media descriptions of her intelligence, emotions, and political profile found in *Kompas* between 1993 and 2001.

Atmonobudi (2004) concludes that, while *Kompas* did not express a clear opinion regarding the appropriateness of a female president, most respondents "negotiated" the descriptions provided by the mass media with their own preexisting perceptions. Among those respondents who supported the idea of a female president, for example, Indonesia having a female president was a matter of pride. Other respondents, however, seriously questioned whether a female president could handle both the demanding duties of the presidency and the traditional demands on women, such as raising children. Some respondents also worried that a woman like Megawati could be easily controlled by the male politicians surrounding her.

Concerning Megawati's perceived intelligence and emotional stability, the study found that Muslim housewives born during the Suharto regime agreed with Megawati's media image as an emotional and not-too-smart woman. Christian housewives born before the Suharto regime, on the other hand, tended to hold the opposite view. All respondents agreed with the media, however, that

Megawati did not have a very distinguished political profile, especially when compared with her charismatic husband, Taufik Kemas.

A dissertation by Gayatri (2002) employed critical discourse analysis to examine how three Indonesian newspapers constructed Suharto's leadership. Gayatri, who analyzed Suharto's leadership in the context of Javanese culture, found that newspapers created the "myth" that Suharto's leadership style was in fact Javanese. This myth was the result of Suharto's habit of using Javanese terminology in his speeches, and his frequent stress on Javanese leadership principles as an example to be followed by all Indonesians. Suharto's words and actions, however, were in fact consistent with the traditional Javanese leadership style only during the first of four stages of his *hanggayuh kasampurnaning hoerip*, a Javanese concept referring to stages in a person's life during which he accomplishes his vision and mission. In the second period, *pengamalan* (putting into practice what had been said), and the third period, *pematangan* (maturation of the leader and fulfillment of his vision), as well as the final climactic period, Suharto's words contradicted his actions, and no longer reflected the values of Javanese leaders. Gayatri (2002) concludes that the media's weakness was that they took Suharto's words at face value, never evaluating his actions in terms of Javanese leadership principles.

In early 2000, a concerted effort was launched to create a more democratic climate in Indonesian broadcasting. The Graduate School of Communication at the University of Indonesia, together with all state and local universities, and a large number of nongovernmental activists and community leaders in 13 provinces across Indonesia, banded together to promote diversity of media ownership and variety in broadcasting contents. At least two reasons were responsible for this joint effort: First, the liberalization and commercialization of the media industry in the post-Suharto era quickly put Indonesia into the "fallacy of the two-model choice" (Bagdikian, 1997, p. 248). This fallacy holds that there are only two choices available for the structure of the media in a nation: State-controlled media, which dominated during the Suharto regime, or an uncontrolled media that focuses on sensationalism in order to boost sales. Second, the broadcasting media were in urgent need of a new broadcasting law and an independent regulatory body to oversee its implementation.

The work of this interdisciplinary group finally contributed to the passage of the new Indonesian Broadcasting Law No. 32/2002 in December 2002 and the establishment of the first Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (*Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia* [KPI]) in December 2003 (Gazali, 2003; Gazali, d'Haenens, Hollander, Menayang, & Hidayat, 2003). However, some parties, especially the owners of commercial television stations, criticized that the new broadcasting law seemed to mimic the Suharto era by establishing the KPI in place of the Ministry of Information (*Kompas,* September 18, 2002). However, the KPI represents an independent regulatory body unlike any that existed during the Suharto regime.

Overall, the interactions between the government, the economy, civil society, and the media during *reformasi* pretty much resemble those during the May 1998

revolution (see Figure 5.1C). Certainly, the economy became stronger during the reform period and is now the main factor that determines which media thrive and what type of style and content is successful. The interplay between media and civil society can be seen in three ways: First, due to the more liberal political climate, the elements of civil society are able to present their views openly in the Indonesian mass media. Second, the media have not significantly supported civil society because many media professionals are still heady with the new freedoms they are enjoying. The result often has been sensational and superficial reporting (Basorie, 2001) or instances of malpractice and excess (Dharma, Pane, Nurkholis, & Mustafid, 2003). Third, the media have tried their best to enhance the civil society in Indonesia, but progress is slow. These last two points may be related to McCargo's (1999) observation that "media practitioners are inclined to overstate their own importance, communication specialists are inclined to depoliticize media activity, and political scientists tend to discount the media's role" (p. 28).

The Media and the 2004 Election

The 2004 general election put a heavy responsibility on the Indonesian mass media. In essence, the media were entrusted with the task of informing the public about an important but complex election, which was described by King (2004) as "a series of elections that are some of the most complex and challenging to have been faced by any democracy, let alone an emerging democracy such as Indonesia's" (p. 1).

The presidential run-off between Megawati Soekarnoputri and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in September 2004 was accompanied by an intense media campaign blitz that lasted only three days. Analyzing the six months prior to this confrontation between the final two candidates in the 2004 election, however, it is fair to say that the Indonesian media did not perform their task very well. The media often ignored their informative task and instead were vying for the political parties' advertising money. The total expenditure on political advertising during the 2004 election campaign, according to some sources, ranged from Rupiah 3 billion (US$272,000) (V. Menayang, personal interview with the Chairman of the Indonesian Advertising Companies Association) to Rupiah 13 billion (US$1,177,000) (*Fajar*, January 12, 2004).

To maximize profits, Indonesian television producers designed programs that related somewhat to the election but, at the same time, ensured high ratings. In general, media professionals and advertisers felt that information about the new election system would not be of much interest to most audiences. Instead, television stations created political gimmicks such as public opinion polls based on Short Message System (SMS) messages that asked respondents to select their favorite candidate for president. Since the stations did not employ any standard scientific polling method, they were quickly criticized by academic observers on the grounds that these polls might mislead the audience with unreliable results (Hidayat, 2004; Qadari, 2004).

In fact, data from Indosat, Indonesia's main cell phone provider, shows that prior to the 2004 election day, the 14 to 15 million SMS messages that are usually sent on an average day in Indonesia increased by 20 to 25% shortly before election day. The company also noted that many SMS messages during that period were sent to 10,000 receivers or more at a time, indicating that SMS was used by political parties to spread their messages. This makes perfect economic sense since it only costs about Rupiah 3.5 million (about US$317) to send one bulk SMS—a bargain compared to the huge costs for placing a political advertisement in newspapers or on television (*Kompas*, April 16, 2004). However, some political parties also took advantage of this popular technology to damage the reputation of the opposition candidates or parties. For instance, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a strong presidential candidate from the newly established Democrat Party (*Partai Demokrat*), was forced to hold a special press conference to deny slanderous accusations launched against him mostly through SMS messages.

While the temptation of new communication technologies was too much to resist for some media organizations, other mass media organizations in Indonesia seriously tried to contribute to the education of Indonesian voters. Nasrullah Nara, a journalist from *Kompas* noted during the 2004 election campaign that:

> In general, all media have tried to do their best in presenting the recent political dynamics approaching the election, both in the form of straight informative news and in-depth exploratory articles. Much more spaces are now opened for the public to channel their views about the election process via comments from the readers, letters to editors, or call-ins for broadcast media. To the best of my knowledge, some media also give free space for the PSA to enlighten people about the new election system. But, unfortunately, there are a few media that appear to mislead the public by blatantly taking sides with certain political parties or figures! A commercial TV station has even shown one particular presidential candidate conducting campaigns across Indonesia in most of its news from early morning to late night. It is hard to believe that it even broadcast live a certain party's last campaign in Jakarta! This partisanship might spread to other media too! (cited in V . Menayang, personal communication, September, 24, 2004)

The television station in question, Metro TV, has been widely criticized for being blatantly partial in its coverage of the political campaign run by the station's owner, Surya Paloh. Surya, one of six presidential aspirants, clashed with party leader and presidential contender Akbar Tandjung over some of the latter's policies. Inside sources told the *Straits Times* (March 18, 2004) that in recent meetings, editors implied that Metro TV would not run reports on Akbar's campaign unless they involved protests against him. In the same report, one of the station's senior journalists showed his discontent: "A lot of news items, which we thought should be priorities, got bumped off for reports on Surya's campaign!" This sentiment was echoed by another senior newscaster at Metro TV who said

that he felt uncomfortable doing unbalanced reporting in favor of the television station's owner (V. Menayang, personal communication, February 9, 2004).

Other media observers agree that the Indonesian media made some progress during the 2004 election campaign. For example, Agus Sudibyo, a researcher who works for the Institute of Information Flow, notes that Indonesian television stations provided relatively fair coverage of all political parties. However, Sudibyo also added that:

> Only very few spaces were dedicated to educating and informing the public about the complicated new election system. TV stations are more concerned with the debate among the political elites. In short, it can be said that while the expectations for the role of the media before the complex 2004 Election was significantly high, the attention and capabilities of the media on average have not increased to the same level. (cited in V. Menayang, personal communication, September 28, 2004)

In addition to television reports about the election, several publications with close links to political parties or presidential contenders emerged shortly before or during the 2004 election campaign. One example is *Mega Demokrat*, established in late 2003 by Taufik Kiemas, the husband of President Megawati. The biweekly tabloid had a circulation of 15,000 copies and provided the latest news about Megawati and her party. The People's Mandate Party, led by Amien Rais, also established its own publication, *The People's Mandate Media*, in August 2003.

Conclusions

In the past 40 years, Indonesia has faced three distinct periods, starting with the Suharto authoritarian regime in 1966. Using the interaction model depicted in Figure 5.1, we are able to see that during this period, the Suharto regime became the center of interaction between the media, the economy, the civil society, and the government itself. Under the political pressures of the regime, the budding academic discipline of political communication developed only slowly in Indonesia. Thus, despite a wealth of topics for political communication research, most academics could not fully explore them due to the constraints imposed by Suharto's government. During this period, the success of implementing open-market policies and maintaining political stability were both considered key factors for achieving economic growth, and hence essential to the legitimacy of the Suharto regime.

The May 1998 revolution can be seen as the result of internal contradictions within Suharto's political, economic, and communication policies, exacerbated by international pressures. Approaching 1998, the Suharto regime became increasingly vulnerable to the democratizing effects of civil society, a free market economy, and a self-asserting mass media. The actual democratic movement, which forced Suharto to resign in 1998, happened so fast that, until recently, it

has been extremely challenging for political communication researchers to provide a comprehensive explanation of the event.

The *reformasi* period, which has shaped Indonesia's political, social, and cultural landscape since 1998 has created a more open, democratic, but also politically weaker government. At the same time, however, Indonesia's civil society, its economy, and the mass media have flourished. As expected, this period also provided a fertile ground for political communication research. The studies collected for this chapter not only show a significant increase in the quantity of research studies conducted in Indonesia since 1998, but also an increase in diversity of researched topics. These new topics include studies of media law and press freedom, the structure of the media industry, religious issues, conflict between parties and various social and cultural groups in Indonesia, and, of course, elections and campaigns.

Two important research trends in Indonesia are noteworthy: First, research on the May 1998 revolution and the *reformasi* period has begun to employ a multidisciplinary approach. During the Suharto regime, most communication studies used theories that originated within communication or political science. Since 1998, however, researchers have made use of a significant number of theories from other fields, such as sociology or political economics. While most scholars assumed that journalists could be easily controlled by the political and economic structures of Suharto's regime, more recent analyses have taken into account the interplay between structure and agency, as well as power relationships between the government, the economy, civil society, and the mass media.

This review has also shown that research at the community level deserves much more attention in the near future. Because Indonesia has many different religions, ethnicities, and cultures, comparing these factors among communities is certainly a promising venue for local communication scholars and should enrich the unique identity of political communication research in Indonesia.

Although *reformasi* expanded political communication research to previously taboo topics, there is very little indication that researchers are enthusiastic about exploring this opportunity. Studies concerning concepts and practices surrounding the Indonesian government, past and present, deserve further exploration. Likewise, power relations between the media and other political and public elements during the 2004 election clearly show that Indonesia's media have just begun to learn how to interact responsibly in the political arena. Finally, the concepts and practices surrounding Indonesia's first direct election in 2004 have also received very little attention from political communication scholars.

Again, we have to remember that the field of political communication in Indonesia is just beginning to realize its potential and more efforts need to be made to keep abreast of developments in other academic disciplines. Especially critical is cooperation with researchers from other countries, which will enable Indonesian scholars to better envision their field and to expand their research focus and methods. As of now, only a few such international joint studies have been conducted.

Finally, it should be noted that unique research efforts have been made in Indonesia already. As mentioned above, academics, nongovernmental organizations, and media practitioners have jointly undertaken research efforts to enhance the interactions between civil society, the market economy, the media, and the government. While this endeavor has a long way to go, it has contributed to the changing media landscape in Indonesia by supporting the growth of local, public, and community media and by establishing Indonesia's first Broadcasting Commission.

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Chapter 6

Political Communication Practices and Research in Malaysia

An Overview

Ezhar Tamam and Manimaran Govindasamy

Malaysia concluded its general election in March 2004 with a landslide victory for the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition party, one of the most successful victories since Malaysia's independence in 1957. The BN received a strong mandate from the voters and secured about 90% of all parliament and state seats. While the dominance of the BN in Malaysia's elections is nothing new, political campaigns have changed greatly during the past decade due to Malaysia's economic development and the growing availability of new communication technologies.

In this chapter we will analyze the relationship between the media and elections in Malaysia with two specific purposes in mind: to investigate the development of political communication practices in Malaysia and to document the progress this field has made in the past decades. To achieve the first goal, we will examine Malaysia's political system and the development of political communication practices with a focus on how the media were used in elections. For the second goal, we will review political communication studies published in Malaysia in order to assess the current state of political communication research in this country.

The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section contains a profile of Malaysia in terms of demographics, the system of government, electoral processes, the economy, and the media landscape. The second section discusses past and current political communication practices in Malaysian election campaigns. Finally, the third section reflects on political communication research that has been conducted and published in Malaysia.

Profile of Malaysia

Malaysia is a federation of 13 states in Southeast Asia with a current population of about 26.7 million people. Malaysia has a fairly young population with slightly over 40% of the people between the ages of 15 and 39 years. Those 21 years and older are eligible to vote and can become political candidates in national, regional, or local elections. Currently, about 10.3 million Malaysians

are registered voters, including 700,000 voters who registered for the first time during the 2004 election (Abas, 2004). However, as of April 2007, about 4.9 million eligible Malaysians had not registered as voters (Foo, 2007).

Since 1994 there has been an increase in the number of new female voters. Women in Malaysia are more likely to vote than men in 7 out of 13 states and in three federal territories, suggesting an upward trend in political awareness, participation, and influence among women (Govindasamy, 2003). Although Malaysians are free to affiliate with any political party, ethnicity is a core dimension of social identification and political affiliations are often based on ethnic background.

While ethnic and religious identification are important issues, Malaysians coexist harmoniously and celebrate diversity. Malays, who are considered the indigenous people, make up about 55% of the population. The Chinese and Indians comprise about 35% and 10% of the population, respectively. Other significant groups are the indigenous Sarawakians and Sabahans, which include the Dayaks, Kadazans (Dusuns), Bajaus, Melanaus, Muruts, and the aborigines of Peninsular Malaysia. Under Malaysia's Federal Constitution, the official religion in Malaysia is Islam. However, people are free to practice any other religion such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Christianity.

In the past four decades, Malaysia has transformed its primary economic base from the exportation of raw materials to the production of electronics and information technology. Today, Malaysia is an advanced developing nation with an estimated per capita domestic product of about US$4,904 (Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia, 2006). Following nearly a decade of strong economic growth averaging about 8% annually, Malaysia was hit hard by the financial and economic crises that struck Asia in 1997 and 1998. After falling by more than 7% in 1998, the economy began to recover in 1999 due to fiscal and monetary policies designed by the Malaysian government.

Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy ruled by a constitutional monarchy. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia divides the authority of the Federation into three parts: legislative, judicial, and executive authority. The separation of powers occurs both at federal and state levels and thus forms the basis of the Malaysian federal government. The legal system is based on Malaysian common law.

The federal head of state is the King (*Yang di-Pertuan Agong*), who is elected for a five-year term by the Sultans of the Malay states. The King is part of the Parliament but does not partake in its proceedings, except to open each session. Executive authority is vested in the King, but is exercisable by a cabinet of ministers headed by the prime minister. The judicial authority resides with the chief justice, also appointed by the King.

The bicameral parliament consists of a nonelected upper house, the Senate or *Dewan Negara* ("Chamber of the Nation") and an elected lower house, the House of Representatives or *Dewan Rakyat* ("Chamber of the People"). There are 70 seats in the Senate, 44 of which are appointed by the King and 26 are chosen by the state legislatures. To fill the 219 seats in the House of Representatives, a

national election is normally held every five years. Executive power is held by the prime minister, who is elected by the party with the majority of seats in the House of Representatives.

An important political player in Malaysian elections is the Election Commission (EC), which was created in September 1957. The main functions of the EC are to carry out the registration of electors and the revision of electoral rolls; to conduct general elections to the House of Representatives and the State Legislative Assemblies; and to review and delimit the Parliamentary and State Constituencies at intervals of not less than eight years (Election Commission, 2002). Although the EC has the power to conduct parliamentary and state elections separately, the EC usually conducts both elections concurrently—with the exception of state elections in Sabah and Sarawak, which, for historical reasons, are held on different dates. The EC has conducted general elections for Peninsular Malaysia since 1959 and in Sabah and Sarawak since 1969.

At least 20 government departments work closely with the EC during each election to ensure that they proceed as smoothly as possible (Govindasamy, 2004). This includes local state governments, the National Registration Department, the Attorney General Department, the Department of Information, the Department of Education, the Malaysian Royal Police, and the Malaysian Royal Air Force.

Malaysia has seen many changes in the number and the type of political parties that participate in each national election. Some of the parties that took part in earlier elections have disappeared from the political arena, while others joined a coalition to form the powerful Barisan Nasional, which has governed Malaysia since its independence from Britain in 1957. The multiracial platform of the BN mainly consists of the United Malay National Organization, the Malaysian Chinese Alliance, and the Malaysian Indian Congress parties. The two main opposition parties, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Pan-Islamic Party of Malaysia (Pas), have contrasting political ideologies. The DAP, currently holding the leading opposition position in parliament, was founded in 1966. It is committed to creating a free, democratic, and socialist Malaysia, based on the principles of human rights, equality, social and economic justice. Although the DAP claims to be a multiracial party, it is dominated by ethnic Chinese. The Pas, on the other hand, was formed in 1955 with the goal of forming an Islamic State. Other opposition parties include the People's Justice Party (*Parti Keadilan Rakyat*), the Malaysian Democratic Party (*Parti Demokratik Malaysia*), and the State Reform Party (*Parti Reformasi Negeri*).

The election process starts with the dissolution of the Parliament and State Legislative Assembly. Both the federal and state constitutions provide for the right of the prime minister and the chief minister of each state to advise the King, Sultan, or governor of each state to dissolve the Parliament and the State Legislative Assembly to pave the way for federal and state general elections. Once the Parliament and State Legislative Assembly have been dissolved, elections must be held within 60 days.

In recent years, a large number of electoral changes were implemented in Malaysia. Between 2001 and 2003, for example, more than 30 new provisions were added to Malaysian electoral law (Election Commission, 2006; Govindasamy, 2002a, 2002b). The new provisions include a new year-round voter registration system; the formation of an Election Campaign Monitoring Enforcement Team comprised of representatives from the EC, police, local councils, and the contesting parties; and new rules against personal attacks during political campaigns. This last provision bars parties and candidates from slandering or making personal attacks against political opponents in speeches or on publicly displayed posters.

Malaysia also has seen significant changes in its media system since the 1950s. The media increasingly are becoming more competitive and continue to provide the public with greater access to information from multiple sources. Unfortunately, as is typical in most developing nations, media access in Malaysia has improved mostly for the rich rather than the poor.

During the first general election in 1959, only 16 mainstream newspapers were published in Malaya and Singapore (Federation of Malaya, 1959). In contrast, the present number of Malaysian newspapers and magazines is 280, including about 46 major dailies and weeklies that are published in Malay, English, and Chinese (Media Guide, 2006). Most of these newspapers were established along communal lines to serve the information needs of different cultural groups. In terms of circulation, *The Star* is the leading English newspaper, *Utusan Malaysia* is the leading Malay newspaper, *Sin Chew Daily* is the leading Chinese newspaper, and *Malaysia Nanban* is the leading Tamil language newspaper.

It is important to note that there is a close relationship between newspaper owners and the political parties of the ruling BN coalition. The Utusan and the New Straits Times Group, for example, are close to the United Malay National Organization. Star Publications, on the other hand, is closely affiliated with the Malaysian Chinese Association, while the Tamil language dailies are associated with the Malaysian Indian Congress. As argued by Kim (2001), these political associations enable the ruling BN party to control most of the editorial content in the Malaysian press. As a consequence, the Malaysian press is expected to offer its undivided support to the government by publishing positive news about the government, its policies, and important state projects. Hasim (2004), however, noted that while the English, Malay, and Tamil mainstream dailies are more supportive of the government, the Chinese dailies tend to be more balanced and neutral in their political coverage.

Political parties also are allowed to maintain their own media outlets to reach their members and supporters. These party media are published either in the form of traditional mass media (newspapers, TV, radio) or new media (Internet). The Pas party, for example, publishes a biweekly newspaper called *Harakah*, while the Democratic Action Party runs the monthly magazine *The Rocket*. The opposition parties also get their views published in *Aliran Monthly*, an English-language online news magazine published by the National Consciousness Move-

ment (*Aliran Kesedaran Negara*), Malaysia's "first multi-ethnic reform movement dedicated to justice, freedom and solidarity" (see www.aliran.com).

Radio broadcasting in Malaysia also expanded at a rapid rate during the past decades. During the first general election in 1959, there were only four stations that broadcast 12 hours a day in Malay, English, Mandarin, and Tamil. Most of these radio broadcasts, however, provided information and news for the purpose of national development. Five decades later, 30 government radio channels reach an audience of about 6 million listeners, while an additional 14 commercial radio channels reach close to 13 million listeners (Media Guide, 2006). While the number of radio stations in Malaysia has increased exponentially, their main objective—promoting economic development—is still evident in their daily programming.

The changes in the media landscape are even more drastic in Malaysian television. When introduced in 1963, only one television channel (RTM 1) broadcast under the control of Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM). In 1969, a second channel (RTM 2) was launched, also guided by the goal of economic development. In line with Malaysia's privatization policy, the government licensed a commercial television station (TV3) in 1984, effectively ending the government's television monopoly. In recent years, the Malaysian government approved three additional private television stations, ntv7, Channel 8, and Channel 9. However, all commercial television stations are part of the Media Prima Berhad monopoly, which recently bought TV3, ntv7, Channel 8, and Channel 9. As a consequence, Media Prima Berhad, which also controls various newspapers and radio stations, has become the largest media corporation in Malaysia. Satellite television began in 1996 with the establishment of the All Asia Networks (Astro). Astro, which reaches more than 1.4 million households with about 75 subscription television channels, is currently the only satellite television provider in Malaysia. The pay TV service MiTV, which uses digital terrestrial broadcasts, was launched in 2005 and offers about 50 television channels from content providers worldwide (Yee, 2005). Similar to Malaysian radio, television remains a major tool for economic development and nation building in Malaysia.

With an emphasis on information and communication technology and the development of a "Multimedia Super Corridor" in 1995, access to new media and alternative information in Malaysia has increased as well. In 2006, Malaysia had about 3.7 million dial-up Internet subscribers and about 490,600 broadband subscribers (Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia, 2006). Internet-based media outlets have flourished in Malaysia, mostly because they are allowed to operate without governmental licensing control or censorship.

In the traditional mass media, however, various laws on defamation, sedition, secrecy, and licensing have a negative impact on press freedom in Malaysia (Manilerd, 1998). The press is subject to restrictive laws such as the Sedition Act, the Defamation Act, the Internal Security Act, the Official Secrets Act, and the Printing Press and Publication Act (Faruqui & Ramanathan, 1998). Under the 1998 Communication and Multimedia Act, the Malaysian Ministry of Energy,

Water and Communication has taken over all functions of the Information Ministry related to the policy and regulatory aspects of broadcasting. Nain (2002) and Anwar (2002) argue that while the government's privatization policy has resulted in greater commercialization of Malaysian media, the economic liberation did not result in less government control of the mass media, which generally remain progovernment.

Development of Political Communication in Malaysia

Since the first general election in 1959, Malaysian voters have witnessed substantial changes in the way the media are used during political campaigns. The mass media not only served to increase people's awareness and understanding of democratic elections, but also played a vital role in reporting election processes and outcomes. This section provides an overview of the development in political campaign practices in Malaysia since 1959. The discussion will emphasize the communication strategies used by the various political parties in Malaysia to reach voters and secure political support.

Election campaigns in Malaysia officially begin immediately after the nomination of the party candidates closes. The campaign for the first general election in 1959 lasted 35 days and was marked by a variety of political communication strategies employed by the parties (Election Commission, 1960). Since the Malaysian mass media were not fully developed in the 1950s, political parties assumed that personal contact was the most effective strategy to convey political messages to voters. As a consequence, public rallies and door-to-door campaigns were used extensively in conjunction with traditional newspaper election coverage. It should be noted that the coverage of the 1959 election was relatively open and fair because the media were not yet dominated or controlled by any individual or political group. In fact, most of the information presented in the 1959 campaign was geared toward educating the public about the election process and the importance of political participation.

The next general election, which was held in 1964, was similar to the first election in both campaign approach and media utilization. However, the 1964 election was also marked by the emergence of partisan election coverage, which generally favored the ruling parties because by now most newspapers were owned and controlled by individuals or groups linked to the government (Abu Bakar, 1998). While television was used for the first time in the 1964 election, coverage of the election was minimal compared to the more established print media.

The rapidly increasing number of television channels and radio stations during the 1960s marked a shift in political campaigning that culminated in the 1969 general election. However, while the increased availability of broadcast media in Malaysia allowed the ruling parties to reach more voters, coverage of the opposition parties was suppressed. In addition to a more extensive use of the mass media in the 1969 election, a number of political parties also began to publish "political books" in several languages in order to explain the parties' manifestos to a wider audience (Election Commission, 1972).

The Chinese–Malay race riots, which began three days after the 1969 election on May 13th and ended with at least 196 deaths among the protesters, led to further government restrictions on the mass media in Malaysia. As a result of the riots, which started in Kuala Lumpur and quickly spread to the surrounding states of Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, the Malaysian government declared a state of national emergency, suspended Parliament, and formed the National Operations Council (*Mageran*) to run the country. In addition, elections in East Malaysia were postponed for an indefinite period. The National Operations Council took drastic action to restore political stability. Publications of all political parties were banned, strict censorship was imposed, and journalists were forbidden to publish or broadcast any material likely to be prejudicial to public order or national security (Hasim, 1996; Karthigesu, 1994; Mahamood, 2004; Vasil, 1980). In addition, the broadcast time of all television and radio stations was limited and the Malaysian mass media were allowed to disseminate official announcements only.

Parliament was restored in 1971, but the race riots and subsequent political controls greatly influenced later elections (Rachagan, 1987). The Malaysian government introduced regulations to ban political rallies during election campaigns and passed a number of laws that indirectly controlled press freedom under the pretext of protecting national development and security. For example, the government amended the Sedition Act of 1948, which prohibits anyone from questioning sensitive issues such as special rights, religion, and languages. Furthermore, a new provision was added to the Election Offence Act forbidding those prosecuted under the Sedition Act from contesting their convictions for a period of five years (Election Commission, 1975; Vasil, 1980). Overall, these amendments and other related regulations had far-reaching consequences for political communication in Malaysia and resulted in less open campaigns in subsequent elections.

As a result of the legislative changes implemented after the 1969 race riots, all public rallies were banned during the 1974 election campaign, which only lasted 16 days. Direct political campaigning was limited to door-to-door and small-group indoor campaigning. However, as a result of the limits imposed on direct campaigning, television and radio were used more extensively than in previous elections to disseminate political information (Kassim, 1978).

Political campaigning did not change much in the 1978 election (Election Commission, 1980). As in the previous elections, the campaign utilized television, radio, newspapers, leaflets, billboards and posters, small-group discussions, and door-to-door campaigning. In addition, party flags and banners were used extensively and could be seen all over the country. The still existing ban on public rallies, however, forced the opposition parties to find new ways of reaching the voters (Ong, 1980). As a consequence, campaigning in public shopping districts and supermarkets became a common way of reaching voters. In addition, most parties started using direct-letter campaigns and distributed free audio cassettes with taped political speeches (Ong, 1980).

Political communication became more sophisticated in the 1982 general election as newspaper and television advertisements gained in popularity. Although

the EC requested that the media should provide "fair and just" coverage for all political candidates and parties, in practice this seemed hardly the case (Election Commission, 1983). As in the previous elections, the ruling BN party alliance was able to control political advertising and news coverage in the mainstream media because of its close ties to media owners. As a result, the opposition was forced again to rely mostly on small-scale door-to-door campaigns, party-owned media, posters, handbills, and billboards to reach voters. Meanwhile, the EC sought the assistance of government-controlled agencies and the mainstream media to educate and encourage voters to exercise their right to vote on Election Day. The public education campaign featured a special song and a documentary film, which were both broadcast on television and radio throughout the election.

The 1986 general election was marked by only 10 days of campaigning, which represented the shortest election campaign since independence. Unlike the BN, which had greater access to the mainstream media, the opposition parties complained that the 10-day campaign period weakened their ability to reach and influence as many voters as possible (Election Commission, 1988). The opposition parties also criticized the election coverage in the mainstream media, which was claimed to be even more biased toward the BN alliance compared to previous elections. However, the 1986 election also saw the introduction of preelection surveys that were published in the mainstream media and allowed voters to better assess the public support for each political candidate.

While the 1990 and 1995 elections did not result in any major campaign changes, the 1999 general election significantly changed political campaigning in Malaysia for a number of reasons: First, never before was an election in Malaysia held under similar conditions of great political instability, which followed the dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in September 1998. Second, the 1999 election also witnessed the emergence of stronger opposition parties capable of forming a government. Third, the mainstream media experienced a credibility gap as a result of backing the government and slanting their coverage of Anwar Ibrahim's dismissal. Finally, the Malaysian government introduced a new information and communication technology policy, which emphasized the role of the Internet during political campaigns.

During the nine-day campaigning period of the 1999 election, posters, leaflets, billboards, flags, and political banners were used extensively. In addition, small political gatherings were held in public places targeting specific groups of voters. The political candidates visited houses and marketplaces and distributed free food and supplies while explaining their political positions and soliciting votes. In addition, Akmar (2004) reports that religious temples were used by the Pan-Islamic Party of Malaysia as platforms to convey campaign messages. Thus, the pulpit became an alternative source of information as the general public trust in traditional sources of information, especially the mainstream media, was at a record low.

During the 1999 campaign, political parties also pioneered the use of Internet to reach voters. For the opposition parties, which received little or no mainstream

media coverage, this new medium provided access to a wider audience, particularly young voters, and allowed the easy dissemination of opposition views. Aziz, Mohamad, Ghazali, and Abdul Rahman (2000) found that the Internet was the third most important source for political information during the 1999 election campaign, outranked only by information obtained from political talks or gatherings and television. Moreover, voters viewed the Internet as the most accurate source for news and information, mostly because of their distrust of the mainstream media (Moten, 2000).

After 22 years in power, Prime Minister Mahathir stepped down voluntarily in October 2003. His successor, Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, won an overwhelming victory in the 2004 general elections, with the ruling Barisan National coalition securing 199 of 219 seats in the lower house of parliament. The 2004 election campaign was marked also by a much softer and gentler campaign style, mostly due to Badawi's more relaxed approach and personality. In addition, the Election Act and the Election Offenses Act were amended to include a new code of ethics aimed at setting the rules for political campaigning in Malaysia.

Although the 2004 election campaign lasted only eight days, it was an extremely intense election. As in previous elections, the BN party received greater media exposure through paid television advertisements and the two television news channels under its control. Compared to the more divided opposition parties, the ruling BN party also had a more organized and comprehensive media campaign in addition to extensive door-to-door promotions. To supplement their campaign efforts, for example, the BN distributed CD-ROMs and DVDs among voters for free. Another new development in the 2004 campaign was a letter from Prime Minister Badawi to more than 500,000 voters asking them to vote on Election Day and to support the present government (Ismail, 2004).

One major difference between the 1999 and 2004 elections was that the latter focused more on political issues rather than discussions of the candidates' personalities. As noted by Moten (2000), the prevalence of character assassinations, the slandering of opposing candidates or parties, and "hate politics" made the 1999 election one of the most negative in Malaysian history. In the 2004 campaign, however, the ruling BN party limited the number of personal attacks on opposition candidates and focused on discussing its own candidate, Abdullah Badawi. Badawi was portrayed as a friendly and pragmatic politician, who was mostly concerned about the efficiency of the Malaysian civil service (Moten & Mokhtar, 2005). In addition, parties were able to exploit only a few pressing national issues during the 2004 campaign, all of which paled in comparison to the Asian economic crisis that dominated the previous election. The opposing parties were left with promising abstract goals such as greater economic progress, stronger national unity, and more transparency and accountability in government.

While the traditional mass media in Malaysia remain controlled by the government, the rapid development of new communication technologies, such as mobile phones and Short Message System (SMS) messages, have offered new

ways to reach Malaysian voters. Despite the fact that the reach of these new technologies was still limited during the 2004 election, political communication scholars observed a significant increase in the use of SMS messages during the 2004 campaign (Hassan, 2004). Both the ruling and the opposition parties used SMS messages during the 2004 campaign to inform voters about election-related issues, to publicize political slogans, and to instruct and guide campaign workers. The United Malay National Organization's Youth and Puteri wings, for example, conducted a special SMS campaign aimed at party members and voters of other parties (Emmanuel, Loh, & Karim, 2004). The Pan-Islamic Party of Malaysia, on the other hand, offered SMS messages that contained the headlines of important news stories and notices about political gatherings. Several mainstream newspapers, including *The Star* and *Utusan Malaysia*, also offered SMS services to keep voters informed.

The spread of SMS messaging during the 2004 election campaign was accompanied by the growing popularity of the Internet and the use of e-mail for political campaigning. Although the Internet penetration rate in Malaysia is still low compared to many other industrialized nations (38.9% in 2006 according to the Computer Industry Almanac, www.c-i-a.com), most political parties have used this new communication technology to disseminate political information and to get feedback from voters. The official party Web sites of Pas and the Malaysian Chinese Alliance, for example, have made impressive use of multimedia content and were used to conducted a series of online polls on political and social issues in the run-up to the 2004 election (*New Straits Times*, 2003). The importance of these new communication technologies is underscored by the fact that, throughout the 2004 election campaign, billboards nationwide advertised e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers of political candidates as well as party Web site addresses.

The popularity of new communication technologies in Malaysia's most recent general election is not surprising given the fact that the media are still heavily controlled by the government. Clearly, new communication technologies offer a variety of opportunities for greater political participation and discourse for the public and the opposition parties. However, while the use of political Web sites, e-mail, and SMS messages is rising, the actual impact of these new communication technologies on the political outcome of elections in Malaysia is still largely unknown.

Political Communication Studies in Malaysia

While research on Malaysian politics has been extensive, research that exclusively investigates the role and influence of communication on political processes is fairly limited. Most past studies on the role of political communication in elections have focused on political media coverage and the use and effects of the mass media during elections.

It is difficult to identify precisely the beginnings of political communication research in Malaysia. In fact, the study of political communication in Malaysia is so new that, at the time of this writing, none of the Malaysian universities offered political communication as a track in their communication programs. While the number of political communication studies in Malaysia is increasing every year, this growth is slow and disjointed. There is also no systematic networking taking place among Malaysian communication scholars or institutions to coordinate research in this emerging field.

The next section will document the current state of political communication research in Malaysia by highlighting key areas of progress. Two lines of discussion will be examined: First, what exactly has been the focus of political communication studies in Malaysia? Second, what methodological and theoretical approaches have informed these studies?

What Has Been Studied?

Drawing exclusively on literature in political communication for this review is problematic and would certainly overlook the contribution of social and political scientists who have studied the system and process of Malaysian politics since 1959. One aspect of the Malaysian electoral system that has been extensively studied by political scientists and sociologists are the elections themselves. Given the small number of elections that have taken place since Malaysia's independence, it is not surprising that all 11 general elections have been analyzed extensively. Due to the diverse research interests and backgrounds of Malaysian scholars, however, most of these studies focus on very diverse aspects of the election process, such as voters' perceptions of political and social issues, the influence of candidate images, the type and impact of political information sources, receptions of campaign messages among voters, and, of course, voting behavior.

In addition, a number of recent survey studies were conducted by the mass media during the 2004 general election. *The New Straits Times* newspaper, for example, commissioned a nationwide study of the 2004 general election (Ismail, 2004; Harun & Yusoff, 2004; Nelson, 2004). In this widely cited preelection survey, about 4,000 registered voters were asked about their perceptions of selected national issues, their perceptions of party leaders, and their sources of political information. The newspaper *The Star* commissioned a similar national survey and reported the findings in their 2004 election coverage (Rajah, 2004; Shen-Li, 2004; Shen-Li & Yong, 2004).

Other studies of the 2004 election were conducted by independent research teams from Malaysian universities and public opinion institutes. A group of sociologists from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, for example, focused on changes in the electoral system, perceptions of voters, and predicting the performance of the ruling coalition party (Mustafa, 2004). Another such survey was conducted in 2003 by a team of researchers from the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research

in collaboration with Institute of Malaysian and International Studies. Among other things, the project assessed the public's interest in politics, perceptions of a wide range of key political and social issues, constitutional and legal aspects, the relationship between the media and the electoral system, and the impact of recent changes in the electoral system on political participation (Amry & Nelson, 2004; Ismail, Amry, & Nelson, 2004; Puthucheary & Othman, 2004).

These more general election studies laid the foundation for more specific studies of political communication in Malaysia. The involvement of communication researchers in election research started in the early 1980s with studies focusing on the role of the mass media in elections. Probably the most important contribution to the study of political communication in Malaysia was made by the two communication scholars Idid and Hasim. Their seminal book *General Elections: A Political Communication Perspective*, which was published in 1993, marked the birth of modern political communication studies in Malaysia. Subsequent studies by Idid and Hasim analyzed campaign issues, images of party leaders, information seeking and media use, and media effects on voters (Idid, 1994; Idid & Buyung, 1995; Idid & Hasim, 1993).

Other communication researchers in Malaysia were less broad in their inquiries. Most of their communication studies focused either on analyses of the coverage and role of mainstream newspapers (Abu Bakar, 1998; Ahmad, 1983; Ismail, 2001; Ismail & Abu Hassan, 1996; Othman, 1983). Other topics that have been studied include the image and popularity of selected political leaders (Hamzah, Tamam, & Suandi, 1997), training needs among young party leaders (Ahmad & Suandi, 1997), Web sites of political parties (Ahmad, 2004; Aziz, Mohamad, Ghazali, & Abdul Rahman, 2000; Chin, 2003), coverage of Malaysian elections in selected international news magazines (Hassan & Tamam, 1996), and coverage of intercultural relations in party organs during election years (Tamam & Abu Hassan, 2002).

Based on the reviewed studies here, it is clear that media sources, media channels, and media messages have been the dominant themes of political communication research in Malaysia. The number of studies that actually investigated the power of the media to influence voting behavior in Malaysia, on the other hand, is surprisingly small.

Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

It is also important to look briefly into the methodological and theoretical approaches used in past election studies that have been conducted in Malaysia. As argued by Lin (1997), an important indication of the growth and maturity of a field of study is a diversity of research topics and a utilization of diverse methodological and theoretical approaches. In Malaysia, cross-sectional surveys and content analyses have been the most popular methods used in media and election studies. Few political communication studies in Malaysia have employed multimethod designs, most likely due to the constraints of context, purpose, or

resources available. However, multimethod designs are especially useful in political communication studies because they provide a better understanding of the dynamic and complex processes involved in voters' decision making processes. Among the few Malaysian studies that have employed multimethod techniques are those conducted by the communication scholars Idid and Abu Bakar. Idid, for example, used surveys, content analyses, and in-depth interviews with party leaders in his analyses of political communication in Malaysia since 1986 (Idid, 1991, 1994; Idid & Buyung, 1995; Idid & Hasim, 1993). Similarly, Abu Bakar (1998) supplemented his content analysis study of the 1959 and the 1964 election coverage with in-depth interviews with newspaper editors.

With regard to theoretical approaches, all the studies reviewed here are informed by traditional Western media theories. Most studies analyzing the relationship between media and elections have focused on identifying sources of political information and on comparing the media agenda and the public agenda during an election campaign. Idid has relied frequently on the media agenda-setting hypothesis to analyze the relationship between media and elections in Malaysia (Idid, 1994; Idid & Buyung, 1995; Idid & Hasim, 1993). Abu Bakar (1998), on the other hand, used social responsibility and media development theory to explain the role of Malaysian press in the 1959 and 1964 elections. Similarly, Wong (2004) examined the legitimacy of Asian-based social responsibility and development journalism by examining the media coverage of the 1999 general election.

To evaluate the effects of the mass media, previous studies have looked at the relationship between the media agenda and the agenda of the general public in Malaysia. The assumption of this type of research has been that the media, by covering certain issues more than others, can influence the salience of issues people consider important. Studies based on this theoretical model have found that the mainstream Malay, Chinese, and Indian newspapers covered slightly different issues, and more importantly, that not all newspapers have been successful in shaping the public's agenda. While Chinese and Indian voters considered issues important that were raised by the Chinese and Indian newspapers, the issues considered important by Malay voters did not match those emphasized by the Malay newspapers (Idid, 1994; Idid & Buyung, 1995; Idid & Hasim, 1993). The studies also found that in states that were eventually won by the BN, the issues considered important by the voters were very similar to the issues covered by the media. In states where the opposition won the election, on the other hand, the public agenda differed significantly from the media agenda. Unfortunately, the reason for the different patterns of relationships between the media agenda and the public agenda in Malaysia remains unclear. Thus, more research needs to be done to better understand how media agenda-setting might work in Malaysia. Specifically, researchers need to identify any intervening variables that might explain what voters learn and remember from the mainstream print media and the government controlled broadcast media.

At the time of this writing, only one locally applicable model of voter decision

making has emerged from the academic literature in Malaysia. In an attempt to predict the outcome of the 2004 election in Malaysia, Idid, Hisham, and Sahari (2005) developed a structural equation model, which showed that the perceived characteristics of the prime minister had the largest and most direct effects on the popular vote, followed by the voters' strength of affiliation with the ruling BN party. The effects of issues considered to be important by the voters, on the other hand, only had an indirect effect on vote choice.

The majority of communication studies in Malaysia, however, are descriptive in nature and empirical tests of even the most established communication theories in the Malaysian context have been rare. Popular Western media theories such as framing and priming, for example, have received no attention in the Malaysian communication literature. Moreover, research proposing theories or voter decision-making models that would be applicable to the specific social, political and cultural conditions in Malaysia do not exist. Overall, this lack of theoretical development in Malaysian political communication studies shows a clear lack of concerted effort and systematic research approaches among Malaysian communication scholars.

Based on this initial assessment, much work needs to be done to better evaluate media effects on the political attitudes, knowledge, and behavior of Malaysian voters. Communication researchers in Malaysia must focus more on the theoretical and methodological contributions of their research and should consider practical and political implications. Obviously, a coordinated and systematic line of inquiry among communication scholars in Malaysia would help in advancing this new and promising field of research.

Conclusions

Based on this review of political communication studies, it is clear that political communication research in Malaysia is still at an early stage of development. Most Malaysian studies in this "new" research area are based on content analyses and surveys as the dominant methodological approaches. While most communication scholars agree that the media influence the voters' perception of political candidates and campaign issues, the exact workings of these media effects need to be investigated further. However, while most political communication studies conducted in Malaysia so far have been descriptive, there is no question that all the studies reviewed here have contributed greatly to a better understanding of the role of the media in Malaysian politics.

Content analyses of election coverage show that the mainstream media in Malaysia pursue a subservient model of political news reporting. Without question, the close relationship between the mass media and the government in Malaysia is responsible for the biased coverage of national elections and the political favoritism afforded to the various parties of the ruling BN coalition. The opposition parties, on the other hand, generally receive less and more negative media coverage during elections.

It is also clear that the media have played an important role in Malaysian elections. Television and newspapers are major sources of political information for Malaysian voters who depend on the media to determine their vote choice. However, most studies found that exposure and attention to political news during elections varied depending on the type of media used and the voters' demographic background. As in other countries, for example, the more educated voters in Malaysia tend to use newspapers more often than television when obtaining information about politics. While Malaysian voters generally seek political information from their preferred media, it remains unclear, however, which voters are the most dependent on the media. Thus, future studies should investigate whether undecided voters are more dependent on the media compared to those who have already made their voting decision.

Despite the importance of descriptive research, communication researchers need to embark on academic research with clear theoretical and methodological goals that will contribute to the political communication field in Malaysia. Researchers also must take into account the multiethnic characteristics of the Malaysian society when analyzing the relationship between media and politics. After all, it is reasonable to assume that culture and ethnicity have a big impact on how Malay, Chinese, and Indian voters make their decisions about who to vote for in each election. If the field of political communication field is to progress in Malaysia, future research should strive toward a clear goal in theoretical advancement. Toward this end, media and political communication scholars must work together in a systematic and concerted manner with a specific research agenda.

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Chapter 7

Political Communication in Japan

Toshio Takeshita and Masamichi Ida

This chapter presents an overview of political communication research in Japan since the 1980s, focusing in particular on work related to the relationships between the mass media and politics. Political communication is defined here as the process of exchanging and interpreting messages among the political elite, the media, and the public.

Political Trends in Japan

The first postwar regime in Japan was a dominant-party system ruled by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that lasted from 1955 through 1993. After Japan's defeat in World War II, there was a decade of rapid political alignments, which resulted in the merger of conservative parties into the LDP, while the leftist parties, except the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), merged into the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). Outwardly, Japan appeared to be a two-party system, but functionally it remained a one-party dominant state because the JSP only had half the number of the seats of the LDP in the Lower House and thus was unable to fully function as an opposition party. This system began to change when minority parties, such as the Democratic Socialist Party, Komeito, and the JCP, began to grow in the 1960s and 70s.

Coinciding with the rise of minority parties, public support for the LDP showed some decline in the mid-1970s. It hit bottom in 1976 and then recovered somewhat, perhaps indicating the overall conservative atmosphere in the country at that time. Polls conducted by the Association for Promoting Fair Elections revealed that the proportion of voters who identified themselves as "conservative" in terms of political ideology increased from 38% in 1972 to 47% in 1986, while the self-described "progressive" voters decreased from 26% to 16% during the same period (Association for Promoting Fair Elections, 1986).

Japan's economy grew rapidly in the 1960s, social security policies progressed, and the government grew larger. However, Japan's rapid economic growth stalled during the oil crisis which occurred in the early 1970s. The Japanese government began issuing deficit-covering national bonds in 1975. The reform of the Japanese

political and economic system, which included streamlining the government and fiscal reform, subsequently became a major political theme.

Premier Nakasone Yasuhiro (in office between 1982 and 1987) made the issue of administrative reform—particularly privatization of the Japan National Railways—a priority. Nakasone, said to be the first "rhetorical" prime minister in Japanese politics (Takase, 1999), tried to appeal to public opinion rather than his fellow members in the Diet to find support for his policies. For example, the prime minister allowed television camera crews to film him when he swam in hotel pools or sat in Zen meditation in a kimono, thus providing the press with "good pictures." He also boasted that he and President Reagan were on first-name terms (referred to as the *Ron-Yasu* relationship).

Meanwhile, pervasive corruption in the LDP gradually undermined the political regime. While the LDP won the 1986 election for both the Upper and Lower Houses by a wide margin, this victory was short-lived. The so-called Recruit scandal, in which the president of the Recruit Corporation offered bribes to powerful LDP politicians, came to light in 1988 and deeply offended many Japanese voters. As a result, the LDP lost its political majority in the 1989 Upper House election. The reaction was a call for political reforms by the Kaifu (1989–1991) and the Miyazawa administration (1991–1993). Unfortunately, these calls for political reform were unsuccessful due to disagreements among the party's politicians, resulting in further frustrations among the Japanese electorate.

The year 1993 was particularly noteworthy for Japanese politics, when over four dozen of the LDP's Diet members defected from the party. As a result, the LDP lost the general election in July of 1993, thus losing political power for the first time in 38 years. After the election, the winning opposition parties (except the JCP) formed a political coalition and launched the short-lived Hosokawa administration (1993–1994). Despite the instability of this new coalition, Premier Hosokawa Morihiro succeeded in advancing political reforms thanks to overwhelming support from the Japanese public. In fact, the new administration changed the electoral system for the Lower House from a multimember district system to a combination of a single-member district and proportional representation system.

Unfortunately, the Hosokawa coalition was ideologically tenuous despite Hosokawa's popular appeal and the continuation of Nakasone-style televised appearances. It collapsed in 1994 and the LDP returned to power after forming a coalition with their longtime rival, the JSP, and with the New Party Sakigake, which was formed by politicians who defected from the LDP in 1993. It really was a political marriage. Murayama Tomiichi, then leader of the JSP, assumed the premiership. However, the Murayama administration (1994–1996) was soon taken over by the LDP-led administrations such as Hashimoto's (1996–1998), Obuchi's (1998–2000), and Mori's (2000–2001).

The new administration, led by Premier Koizumi Junichro, commenced in 2001 with an approval rating of nearly 80%. Koizumi's popularity may be

attributable to his compelling advocacy of structural reforms and the appointment of a very popular politician, Tanaka Makiko (daughter of former Premier Tanaka Kakuei) as foreign minister. Like his predecessors Nakasone and Hosokawa, Koizumi tried to use the Japanese mass media to garner public support necessary to compensate for his weak power base within the ruling LDP.

Many Japanese voters, disillusioned and frustrated with politics since the collapse of the Hosokawa coalition in 1994, gave up all party affiliations and became independents. Consequently, the influence of long-term factors such as ideology and party identification has been declining in Japan during the past decade. The mobilizing power of social groups, such as industry organizations and labor unions, also has been weakening. Short-term factors, including political issues and politicians' popularity, on the other hand, have gained influence on voting behavior and suggest an increasing influence of the mass media in Japanese election campaigns. Koizumi's landslide victory in the 2005 general election, for example, might be attributable to his superb strategy and compelling appeals to the public through television. The medium seemed to help Koizumi put his "own" issue, privatization of postal services, at the top of the election agenda and transform the election into a single-issue referendum. The weakening influence of long-term factors and the increasing use of the mass media in the political arena finally appeared to push Japan into the age of modern media politics.

Present State of Japanese Media

Japan enjoys a very high newspaper diffusion rate with a total circulation that has exceeded 50 million copies per day since the 1990s. On average, each Japanese household consumes 1.04 newspapers per day, indicating a saturated market (*Nihon Shimbun Kyokai*, 2006). The circulation of the five major national dailies (*Yomiuri, Asahi, Mainichi, Nihon Keizai*, and *Sankei*) account for a little more than half of the total circulations of dailies printed in the country. *Yomiuri* has the greatest circulation with 10 million daily copies, followed by *Asahi* with 8 million copies. Most households in metropolitan areas subscribe to one or two national dailies, while readers in the rural areas of Japan prefer local and regional newspapers.

The launch of commercial and public television broadcasts in the early 1950s was an important event in Japan's political history. Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), the public service broadcaster, was originally established in 1926 as a virtually state-controlled company. It then transformed into an independent public corporation in 1950 on the instructions of the Allied Powers' General Headquarters that occupied Japan between 1945 and 1952. Both NHK and the commercial television stations began broadcasting in 1953 and grew very rapidly. By the late 1960s, over 90% of Japanese households owned at least one television set.

The present penetration rate for television is 99% (Fujitake, 2000). Currently, the dual system of public and commercial broadcasters operates over 120 local

television stations across Japan. NHK, which has become one of the largest public service broadcasters in the world and is often compared with the British BBC, operates several terrestrial and satellite television and radio networks across the country. Like other public service broadcasters, NHK depends on subscription fees for its revenue. In contrast, commercial broadcasters in Japan are loosely grouped into five national television networks: the key stations are Nihon TV, Tokyo Broadcasting System, Fuji TV, TV Asahi, and TV Tokyo. Unlike NHK, however, commercial television networks in Japan have to compete vigorously for audience ratings.

Four of the five main television stations in Japan have formed large cross-media ownership groups—Nihon TV with the *Yomiuri*, TV Asahi with the *Asahi*, TV Tokyo with the *Nikkei*, and Fuji TV with the *Sankei*. The first three cross-media groups are controlled by their respective national newspaper companies, whereas *Sankei* is a subsidiary of Fuji TV. These groups can be characterized as domestic media conglomerates since they also own other media businesses, such as radio stations, publishing firms, advertising agencies, recording companies, and databank services.

In addition to terrestrial broadcasting services, direct broadcasting satellite (DBS) services began in 1989. High-powered direct broadcasting satellite (BS) services launched in analog in 1989 and in digital in 2000, while the low-powered communication satellite (CS) services began broadcasting in analog in 1992 and became digital in 1996. A survey by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications (MPHPT, 2006a) indicates that in 2005 the penetration rates for households were 35% for the BS analog service, 14% for the BS digital service, and 9% for the CS services. Similarly, the reach of cable television in Japan has been about 33% in 2005. While the reach of satellite and cable television is on the rise and the number of TV channels available to the Japanese audience is steadily growing, these television services are not currently influential enough to attract mass audiences and compete with the traditional commercial and public television broadcasters.

The Internet in Japan plays a complementary role to television and newspapers for information seeking, but has not yet superseded the function of traditional mass media (Saito, Takeshita, Kawakami, & Midooka, 2004). *Information and Communications in Japan: White Paper 2006* (MPHPT, 2006b) estimated that 67% of Japanese people used the Internet in late 2005. However, the traditional mass media still enjoy a high rate of confidence and trust among the general public. A national poll conducted by NHK in 2002, for example, investigated which media the Japanese public regarded as the most useful for "learning what happened in the world" and for "helping to think about politics or social problems." Overall, a vast majority thought that television (97%) and newspapers (95%) are the most useful, while only 1% regarded the Internet as the most useful for learning and thinking about public affairs. However, 21% of the respondents thought the Internet is the most useful for "searching for something interesting" (Shiraishi & Ida, 2003).

Politics and Japanese Media

Understanding the relationship between politics and the media in Japan requires an examination of three unique characteristics of political communication in this country: press clubs, the editorial policy of neutrality, and the differences between public and commercial news broadcasts.

Press clubs (*Kisha kurabu*) play an important role in the news-making process of Japan's major newspapers and broadcasting organizations. Most public institutions, such as the Office of the Prime Minister, the Diet, central government ministries, local government units, the courts, the police, and large corporations, all have their own press club—about 900 in all. These press clubs provide journalists with office space and other facilities free of charge. Since press conferences and briefings are usually held in these clubs, most journalists find them to be an efficient system for gathering information from official news sources.

The origin of press clubs in Japan dates back to the last decade of the 19th century, when journalists voluntarily banded together to obtain information from official sources. However, in the early 1940s, the Japanese government used the press clubs to control the mass media by setting up clubs for each major government institution and by limiting the membership to these clubs. While the journalistic autonomy of the press clubs has increased in postwar Japan, the pattern of deployment—one club to each institution with limited access—has remained largely unchanged (de Lange, 1998; Feldman, 1993; Freeman, 2000; Kim, 1981).

Maesaka (1996) identified four main problems with the press club system in Japan. First, journalists affiliated with a press club have the advantage of receiving often restricted information directly from the official sources. This is a clear disadvantage to journalists who are not permitted to join the club, such as those working for media companies other than major newspapers or television stations, freelance journalists, and foreign reporters. Because of this restrictive access, Freeman (2000) referred to the press clubs as "information cartels." Second, the restrictive character of the press clubs helps to form exclusive and cozy ties between the member journalists and the sources. Thus, the media may lose or compromise its surveillance function and become subject to indirect controls by official sources. Third, official press club sources are likely to bombard the member journalists with frequent briefings and press releases. As a consequence, journalists frequently have to expend substantial time and energy to process the overwhelming flow of information from press clubs and often have difficulty generating independent analyses without producing formulaic, uniform stories. Fourth, news media that are dependent upon the press club system tend to passively echo the agenda set by official news sources, thus abandoning their own agenda-setting power.

While the Japanese press club system represents an "institutionalization of information subsidies" (Gandy, 1982) by fostering the media's dependence upon

official sources, most major newspapers in Japan print a morning and an evening edition and demand great quantities of news material. This might partly explain why, despite longstanding criticism, the Japanese mass media continue to adhere to the press club system.

Most of the major newspapers in Japan have adopted a so-called "neutrality principle" (*fuhen futo shugi*) as their editorial policy. The Japanese neutrality principle differs slightly from the Western media's concept of objectivity. Objectivity is an assertion that facts should be reported as fairly and in as balanced a way as possible. However, the neutrality principle of Japan demands more; it states that journalists should be impartial observers of events or bystanders. The media should not take sides in analytical or editorial articles, but rather assume a conciliatory position. That is why very few newspapers in Japan carry editorial endorsements in election coverage.

The first newspaper that explicitly declared the neutrality principle as its editorial policy appeared around 1918, during the infancy of Japanese democracy. When a popular revolt, the rice riot, broke out in 1918, the *Osaka Asahi* took sides with the insurgents and severely criticized the government, which, in turn, immediately criticized the newspaper for its partisan viewpoints. In order to escape an impending printing ban by the government, the *Osaka Asahi* declared that it would adopt the neutrality principle in all future news reports. Other major Japanese newspapers soon followed the *Asahi*'s example and adopted the same editorial policy (Yamamoto, 1973).

The neutrality principle represents, in a sense, a public concession of defeat made by journalists against those in power. Ironically, however, it also offered an unintended advantage to the media. Remaining nonpartisan and neutral has enabled the press to attract a wide readership across different social classes and groups by not alienating any specific group or class (Takagi & Katsura, 1979). This implicit advantage may be the reason that most Japanese newspapers continue to observe the neutrality principle even after being freed from the strict government controls that were in place before and during World War II. The neutrality principle has also been recognized as a leading editorial principle by Japanese broadcasters and was incorporated into the 1950 Broadcast Law. In fact, Shibayama (1997) maintains that the neutrality principle can help the media to coordinate and reconcile conflicting parties, thus fostering social consensus.

Other scholars, however, note that the neutrality principle could encourage passive journalism. Ishikawa (1990), for example, selected several political issues in the late 1980s and analyzed the coverage of these issues in major national newspapers. The author found that most of the news stories were based on official sources and generally followed the agenda set by these sources. In a later report, Ishikawa (1995) attributes the apparent passivity of the Japanese press to the neutrality principle and called for a more pronounced effort by the media to set the public agenda. Krauss and Lambert (2002), on the other hand, assert that the Japanese media are not completely passive. The media not only convey the official agenda to the public, but sometimes exert their own subtle agenda-setting

power. Krauss and Lambert's (2002) content analysis of news stories on political and administrative reforms in *Asahi* between 1992 and 1997 nicely demonstrates how the Japanese media achieve neutrality in their reporting. In contrast to U.S. press stories that try to remain balanced by presenting arguments both for and against an issue, Japanese stories appear neutral because they carry only facts and no arguments. However, Krauss and his associate note that a small number of the *Asahi* news stories actually presented independent analyses and proreform views to readers (Krauss & Lambert, 2002).

Television news programs aired by the public and commercial broadcast stations in Japan differ significantly in their selection of news stories. A content analysis conducted in 1997, for example, showed that NHK evening news resembled the news presented by the "Big Three" national newspapers (*Asahi, Mainichi*, and *Yomiuri*) more closely than the news of the commercial broadcasters (Hagiwara, 2001). Based on a content analysis of NHK's evening news in the early 1980s and interviews with its production staff, Krauss (1996) asserts that NHK performs the function of legitimating the Japanese state. According to the study, NHK news tended to emphasize factual stories about government decisions, proposals, and ceremonies rather than reporting intragovernment conflicts and disagreements. Krauss (1996) concluded that the positive images of government by NHK news might have had the effect of reinforcing public support for the status quo.

In the 1980s, commercial broadcasters also created a new type of nightly news program with more critical and entertainment-oriented news to better compete with NHK news. *News Station*, a news program that was broadcast on TV Asahi between 1985 and 2004, was one of the pioneers of this type of television news. In contrast to NHK news, whose main viewers were rural, older, and less-educated women, *News Station* targeted younger, well-educated men living in urban centers (Krauss, 2000). The program featured newscasters that often added their own opinions and comments, which set them apart from the neutral reporting that characterized NHK. The program became very popular within two years and ushered in a new, more opinion oriented standard for television news in Japan.

The popularity of this new type of television news also increased the concern of politicians that individual newscasters might exert too much influence on public opinion. A poll of members of the House of Representatives conducted by the *Yomiuri* in 1996 indicated that 97% of the politicians agreed with the statement that "Comments made by TV newscasters or made in TV news shows can sway the public's voting behavior" ("Shuin-giin," 1996).

Commercial TV news in Japan might have also contributed to a "video malaise" effect that nurtures political distrust and cynicism (Robinson, 1976). Taniguchi's (2002) content analysis of the 2000 election coverage by NHK and *News Station*, for example, found that the news stories by *News Station* were more likely to use strategy frames than the stories by NHK. According to the U.S. scholars Cappella and Jamieson (1997), these strategy frames generally emphasize (1) winning and losing; (2) games and conflicts; and (3) the performance and style

of the candidates, and, by doing so, generate political cynicism in the minds of the audience. Taniguchi (2002) also found that *News Station* was likely to depict politicians in an overall negative tone regardless of their party affiliation. Using national poll data collected between 1994 and 1996, the author demonstrated that exposure to *News Station* led to higher levels of political cynicism among the Japanese public, while exposure to NHK news had no such effect. Thus, it would be ironic if the new, more independent, news style found in commercial television news in Japan actually might alienate the public from politics.

The Role of the Media in Japan's Policymaking Process

Iwai (1999) noted that Japanese researchers have paid scant attention to the media's role in the output process of the political system. Topics such as "media and elections" and "media and political attitudes" are prevalent, but inquiries into "media and policy-making processes," particularly studies presenting a generalized model of the process, are very uncommon.

The "referent pluralism" model proposed by the political scientist Kabashima Ikuo represents a rare example for studies of the policy-making process in Japan (Kabashima, 1990; Kabashima & Broadbent, 1986). The model was originally conceived with the LDP one-party dominant system in mind. In an elite survey with leaders and active members of 11 social groups in Japan, including the mass

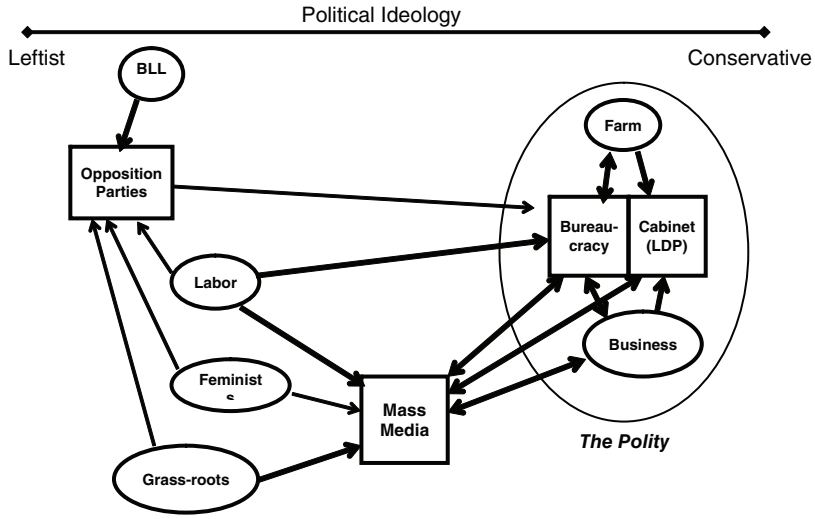

Figure 7.1 The Referent Pluralism Model. *Note:* The ovals represent pressure groups; the arrows the flow of influence. BLL (the Buraku Liberation League) stands for the social movement organization calling for affirmative actions for descendents of the Burkaku people (the underprivileged caste in the feudal era of Japan). *Source:* Adapted from Kabashima (1990) with permission of the author.

media, Kabashima asked the respondents to rate the extent to which each of the groups was influential in Japanese society. The study revealed that the mass media was not only perceived to be the most influential group, but also as the most accessible to both powerful and weaker interest groups in Japan. These findings led Kabashima to infer that Japan's mass media play an important role by introducing the principles and ideas of these often ignored interest groups into the political system. He concluded that by remaining outsiders and yet influential in politics, the mass media help the political system to become more pluralistic.

Kabashima (1990) characterizes the influence of the media as "referent power," the ability to arouse the public's sympathy for or indignation over those involved in challenging situations. Kabashima's assumption appears to be consistent with the tendency of the Japanese press to wage emotional and moralistic campaigns over valence issues, which we discussed earlier. Further, the referent pluralism model assumes that the mass media have some influence on setting the policy agenda. For example, Kabashima and Broadbent (1986) maintain that the environmental, feminist, consumer, and grassroots movements in the 1960s and early 1970s would not have been able to exert political influence without the help of the mass media.

Executives from major media companies in Japan are often invited to join government policy advisory committees because the media are supposedly familiar with what the general public needs and wants. Akhavan-Majid (1990) asserts that this membership in government committees has enabled the media to have a considerable effect on policy-making processes in Japan. However, his conclusion was drawn from his study of Japan's media policies on cable television and DBS developments, wherein traditional media members themselves represent special interests. Other scholars speculate that allowing media executives to become members of official policy advisory committees may indicate that the media are "taken in" by the government (Amano, 1989). How can frontline journalists boldly and relentlessly criticize government policy plans when they are aware that their bosses are among those who contrived the core ideas of the plans? Further questions have been raised about the media's power of policy agenda setting. Ishikawa (1990) asserts that it is more likely that the media are actually influenced by the government, due to the media's heavy dependence on official sources, especially in the still dominant press clubs.

Media Attention as a Political Resource

Media attention can be a powerful resource for policymakers and interest groups that intend to promote a particular public policy, since media coverage often reflects and influences trends in public opinion. Based on the so-called resource mobilization theory, Oishi (1984, 1985, 1988) examined how social movements influence governmental policy-making processes and whether the media can help the movements to promote their causes. Oishi (1984, 1985) analyzed the media coverage of two campaigns, an environmental campaign against the planned

construction of a tourist road through a national park and an antiurban development campaign calling for the conservation of a stream in a densely populated area of Japan. Both campaigns peaked in the 1970s and were fairly successful in achieving revisions in the government's original development plans. According to Oishi, the repeated and cumulative media coverage of industrial waste pollution and the related health hazards in Japan created a "climate of opinion" for environmentalism by dispersing ecological values throughout the nation. The author argues that this climate of opinion supported the analyzed environmental campaigns and helped to put pressure on policymakers.

Sato (2003) analyzed the contents of national newspaper stories on the issue of smoking and health between 1945 and 1990, discussions on tobacco in the Diet between 1968 and 1990, and a series of administrative actions for smoking control extracted from government reports between 1945 and 1990. The author found that the number of newspaper articles on the antismoking movement, independent of the Diet's agenda on smoking issues, was correlated with the number of restrictive actions against smoking by government agencies. Sato (2003) concluded that media coverage worked as a political catalyst by mobilizing administrative agencies.

The pros and cons of the media acting as a political catalyst must be examined in more detail. Campbell (1996) states that, besides mobilizing political and social organizations, the use of the media is a "next best" means for policymakers who seek policy changes. Policy makers often ask the media for help when they have only limited resources. Contrary to their expectations, however, the media do not always act in favor of would-be policy promoters—all too often they behave in random, unpredictable, or irrational ways. Campbell referred to Pharr's (1996) characterization of the media as "trickster," a concept which is based on the literature of symbolic anthropology. The metaphor of the trickster suggests that the media's stance toward authority in a given society is not necessarily stable and consistent; in contrast, it fluctuates and is unpredictably changeable—the media sometimes flatter the "king" and sometimes ridicule or satirize him. Thus, the media seem to be unreliable allies for any public official. Campbell argues that media attention as a political resource could disrupt the promotion of certain policies since the media tend to have a fickle interest in public affairs and often prefer sensational topics to serious discussions.

Campbell (1996) studied the policy-making processes for health and welfare issues in Japan for over two decades. One of his cases exemplifies how the mass media "betrayed" the expectations of policy promoters. Officials at the Social Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) decided to enhance the status of their office in the late 1960s by informing the general public about the issue of underdeveloped welfare policies for the elderly. To that end, the officials planned an active media strategy with intensive publicity. However, the media paid very little attention to the solutions and preventive measures proposed by the MHW officials, but instead focused on a local government proposal for free medical care for citizens aged 70 or above. The ruling LDP party,

impressed by the media coverage for the free medical care policy, concluded that the policy had won public approval and decided to make it a national policy. As a result, the MHW was unwillingly forced to enact a welfare policy that might turn into an enormous fiscal burden in the future. Thus, while the media strategy adopted by the MHW successfully put the problems of the elderly on the policy agenda, it utterly failed to generate public or governmental support for the policies proposed by the ministry.

Japanese Election Coverage

Election coverage can generally be classified into two aspects. First, there is the "substance" aspect, which addresses topics such as policies, public issues, and qualifications of the candidates. Second, there is the "game" aspect, which focuses on the winning and losing of candidates, their political strategies and logistics, and the conduct of the campaign itself. Both aspects contribute to increase the voters' interest in the election. However, an overemphasis on the game aspect in election coverage can overwhelm the substance of the campaigns and trivialize the opportunity for political participation.

In contrast to most of the research on election coverage in the United States (e.g., Patterson, 1980), which reports that the coverage of presidential campaigns mostly focuses on the horse-race aspects rather than issues, Akuto (1996) found that Japanese newspapers put more emphasis on the political substance rather than the game in their election stories. In his studies of the 1979 Tokyo gubernatorial election and the 1986 Machida (a suburban city of Tokyo) mayoral election campaigns, Akuto (1996) attributed the different reporting styles found in the United States and Japan to the differences in the election systems, primarily the different lengths of the campaign period in each country. Because election campaigns in the United States can last a year or longer, the U.S. media have to use game stories in order to keep attracting an interested audience. In Japan, on the other hand, most election campaigns last only two or three weeks, and the media are forced to focus on substance in the brief period available for political discussion.

Of course, the character of election coverage in Japan is also influenced by where this coverage appears in the mass media. Hagiwara and Fukuda (2001), for example, compared newspaper and television news in Japan by studying how the media covered the 1999 Tokyo gubernatorial election campaign. They found that television news focused on how the candidates competed with each other, while the newspapers covered the different candidates' policy proposals. Thus, television news stressed the game aspect of the 1999 election, while the press was more likely to emphasize substance.

To many media scholars in Japan, one of the most interesting political media effects are the so-called announcement effects, which focus on the potential influence of election polls on voter turnout and choice. Most Japanese media organizations usually conduct opinion polls about one week prior to Election Day.

Arai (1988) found that poll-based predictions of election outcomes are among the most popular types of election stories for voters in Japan. Western scholars have stated that the popularity of predictive elections polls in the mass media might result in a "bandwagon" or "underdog" effect. The former effect predicts that the poll predictions help the winner-designate gather even more support, while the latter asserts that the loser-designate benefits from the prediction (e.g., Lang & Lang, 1984). Both of these effects are labeled "announcement effects" by Japanese scholars.

Empirical tests of the announcement effects have resulted in inconsistent findings depending on the research method used. Ikeda (1988), for example, examined the announcement effect by using panel survey data from a 1986 election poll conducted in Musashino City, a suburb of Tokyo. His findings indicate that although the predictions had a significant effect on how the respondents perceived the outcome of the election, they had little influence on their voting intentions. In contrast, Maeda and Kobayashi (1980) argue that the announcement effect actually might occur as an underdog effect in Japan's multiple-member district system. The authors compared the projected rankings of political candidates in the 1976 and the 1979 general elections with the actual candidate rankings that resulted from the votes in each district. Interestingly, candidates that were predicted to have about a 50-50 chance of being elected showed the greatest positive differences between predicted and actual rank, suggesting that these candidates benefit most from the predictions.

Another aspect of announcement effects is how media predictions influence the campaign staff rather than the general voters. Kamegaya's (1998) study suggests that the morale of the campaign staff usually is boosted when the media report that their candidate is fighting a close race. In contrast, the staff's morale tends to be lower when the media announce that a candidate will be elected easily. Because the morale of a campaign staff can make or break a successful election campaign, the political importance of this effect should not be underestimated.

Japanese Media Effect Studies

Only a few studies have examined the question of whether election coverage has a direct influence on the voters' attitudes in Japan. Flanagan (1991) conducted a national survey during the 1976 Lower House election, which asked respondents whether anything they had seen on television or read in the newspapers had changed their opinions about any of the candidates or political issues. The study revealed that about 9 out of 10 respondents said that their opinions were not changed as a result of media use. Okabe et al. (1982) used a similar self-report measure to investigate whether television campaign broadcasts had any effect on the attitudes of Japanese voters. The authors interviewed female voters in Sendai City during the 1980 double election campaigns. According to the findings, 41% of the respondents felt that "the campaign broadcasts helped strengthen my existing preferences" (reinforcement), 35% answered that "the broadcasts helped

me confirm for whom to vote" (activation), and only 6% said "I switched to another candidate due to the campaign broadcast" (conversion).

The concept of "interpersonal influence" on political choice is closely related to media effects. Inglehart (1990) reported that the frequency of political conversation among the Japanese is much lower than in other developed countries. He attributed this to Japanese cultural characteristics, particularly because Japan is a consensus-oriented society and there is a widespread tendency to avoid conflict. Whatever the validity of such cultural explanations, interpersonal communication about elections is minimal even during national campaigns. A poll conducted in Musashino City during the 1986 double election campaigns showed that four out of five voters had never discussed the coming election with coworkers, neighbors, acquaintances, or friends. However, about half of all respondents said that they had talked about the election with their family members or relatives (Kawamoto, 1988).

Ikeda (2000) demonstrated that these interpersonal networks can have a significant partisan influence on voters' opinions and behaviors during elections. Based on a survey conducted just before the 1993 general election, the author showed that two-thirds of the respondents were able to identify people with whom they talked about politics. Half of those who were able to name a person with whom they talked about politics were also able to guess which party these "network partners" might support. Moreover, those who thought they were aware of their network partners' party preferences were also more likely to vote for the same party as their network partner. Thus, interpersonal networks in Japan were found to be fairly homogeneous in terms of political partisanship. Ikeda (2000) concluded from these findings that interpersonal networks in which politics is discussed can exert a significant political influence on its members' voting intentions.

The concept of media agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) was introduced to Japanese academe relatively early compared to other non-Western countries. Theoretical reviews of agenda-setting research (e.g., Okada, 1979) and empirical studies began to appear in the late 1970s (Iwabuchi, 1986; Kobayashi, 1983; Maeda, 1978; Takeshita, 1983). In fact, Takeshita (1997) suggested that there was a "hidden" history of agenda-setting research in the 1950s and 1960s in Japanese communication research. Sociologists such as Shimizu (1951) and Fujitake (1968), inspired by Lippmann's (1922) arguments on the "pseudo-environment," advanced their own pseudo-environment theories that attempted to explain how the mass media influence our behavior by controlling our perceptions of reality. The concepts of these theories have much in common with those of agenda-setting research, since the latter is based on the assumption that the media define our social world on our behalf. Although the Japanese versions of the pseudo-environment theory were primarily descriptive and presented only with anecdotal evidence, they were precursors of the agenda-setting approach used in Japan in the late 1970s.

Similar to agenda-setting studies conducted in the United States, studies conducted in Japan confirmed that agenda-setting effects are not universal. Instead, they depend on contingent social and psychological conditions that encourage the effect processes. The "need for orientation" is one well-known contingent condition advanced in the United States (Weaver, 1980). According to Weaver (1980), individuals who are both interested in a political issue *and* feel uncertain about it tend to have a high level of need for orientation, which, in turn, leads to increased mass media use and therefore a greater potential for media agenda-setting effects. This concept of informational need has also proven to be effective in explaining the agenda-setting effects in the Japanese context (Takeshita, 1993). And some studies have dealt with the second level of agenda-setting as well as the first level (Ogawa, 2001; Takeshita & Mikami, 1995).

While the agenda-setting theory has been successfully applied in a variety of different countries and cultural settings, the question remains as to whether there are any agenda-setting effects that are unique to Japan. Recent studies have found, for example, that agenda-setting effects in Japan are stronger at the perceived-community level than at the intrapersonal level (Takeshita, 1993; Takeshita & Takeuchi, 1996). The perceived-community agenda is comprised of issues that individuals perceive to be important to other people in their community, while the intrapersonal agenda denotes a list of issues that individuals regard as the most important personally. According to Takeshita and his colleague, the strength of the perceived-community level agenda-setting effect can be explained by the fact that many Japanese tend to have a strong motivation to learn about the majority view of their community (or *seken* in Japanese). These perceived majority views, in turn, often act as a guide on how to act in public (Inoue, 1977). Based on the assumption that most Japanese like to learn about what most other people are thinking from the mass media, agenda-setting effects in Japan are more likely at the perceived-community level rather than at the intrapersonal level (Takeshita, 1993).

A number of media scholars also have tried to confirm the media priming theory in the Japanese context. The priming theory asserts that the media can influence the standards by which the political elite are judged by calling attention to particular issues or aspects of politics (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Ikeda (1997), for example, showed that exposure to various television news programs influenced the respondents' impressions about how each political party dealt with the political reform-related bills enacted in 1994, which in turn influenced the respondents' overall impressions of each party. Shikano (1997) used survey data gathered between 1994 and 1995 to demonstrate that both newspaper and television news had priming effects on evaluations of the major political parties in Japan. Similarly, Imai (2001) found that a popular television talk show in 1993 exerted a priming effect on the overall evaluation of the prime minister by influencing the perceptions of various political reforms. However, the author found that the media coverage did not contribute directly to votes cast for the prime minister's ruling party.

The theory of media framing has attracted scholarly attention in Japan since the late 1970s. The framing perspective explores how the media cover an issue or event by applying certain frames (interpretive frameworks), and how the media's framing consequently influences people's understanding of that issue or event. A seminal study by Hayakawa, Ogawa, and Okuno (1975) was the first to test media framing in Japan. The study, which actually does not explicitly use the term *framing*, investigates the press coverage of strikes by the Japan National Railroad's (JNR) union workers in 1972 and 1973. The study concluded that the press helped marginalize the labor movement by typifying the union workers as "perpetrators" and the passengers as "victims." Other studies in Japan examined the dominant frames used by Japanese newspapers to cover the regime change in Japan after World War II (Tsuruki, 1982, 1988) and Japan's nuclear energy policy (Karasudani, 2003).

Noelle-Neumann's (1974, 1984) spiral of silence theory also has been fairly popular among communication and public opinion researchers in Japan. The theory basically predicts that people who perceive their opinions to be popular or gaining public support will be more likely to express their views than those who believe that their opinions are not shared by most people or are losing ground. The tendency of the one group to speak up and the other to be silent starts off a spiraling process, which increasingly establishes one opinion as the prevailing one (Willnat, Lee, & Detenber, 2002). The theory appeals to Japanese researchers because the conformist or consensus-orientated image of the public, on which the spiral of silence process is based, correlates with some Japanese cultural traits.

Replications of the spiral of silence theory in Japan, however, have produced mixed results. Tokinoya (1996), for example, found support for the spiral of silence in several surveys that were conducted in Tokyo between the late 1980s and the early 1990s and focused on topics such as the "demise of Emperor Hirohito," the "scandals of major politicians from the ruling party," and the "issue of amending the Constitution." A comparative study conducted by the same author in Japan, China, and Korea, however, only found partial support for the theory depending on the issues tested (Tokinoya, 1989).

Other studies conducted in Japan found even less convincing evidence for the spiral of silence theory. Iwabuchi (1989), for example, unsuccessfully tested the theory with issues such as the privatization of the Japan National Railroad and the introduction of a sales tax. Similarly, perceptions of the political climate of opinion during the 1986 double election failed to influence voters' willingness to publicly express their views about the candidates and their voting intentions (Ikeda, 1989). In a study conducted during the same election, Kobayashi (1990) actually found that respondents holding the minority position were more willing to express their opinions than those who held the majority view.

Japanese scholars, however, have contributed significantly to the theoretical development of the spiral of silence theory. Ito's (1996, 2002) tripolar *kuuki* model, for example, provides a possible explanation for how collective decision are made

in Japan. The model is comprised of three "poles" or sectors: the government, the mass media, and the public. The model predicts that when two out of the three sectors in society reach agreement regarding a particular issue, the agreement will pressure the other sector to conform, thus reaching an overall consensus.

Ito (1996) tested his model in a study of the political controversy that surrounded the proposed participation of the Japanese military in the United Nations peace-keeping activities in the Middle East after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. However, the backlash of public opinion against this proposal combined with the criticism in the mass media forced Prime Minister Kaifu to withdraw the proposal. Thus, after the *kuuki* (climate of opinion, mood, or atmosphere) critical of the proposal became dominant in two sectors of Japanese society, the third sector was forced to act accordingly.

Conclusions

This chapter presented an overview of political communication research in Japan since the 1980s, focusing primarily on work related to the relationships between the mass media and politics. Traditional mass media, such as major national newspapers and the public service broadcaster NHK, however, have played a somewhat passive role in Japan's political communication environment. This is mainly due to the fact that the mass media in Japan have traditionally been reluctant to state clear positions or set the political agenda. Mainstream media organizations in Japan usually gather news materials through press clubs established in major public institutions and corporations. As a result of this closed system, exclusive relationships between the sources and reporters thrive and thus serve to suppress any news that might divert from the official line. In addition, mainstream media are likely to convey only the news items obtained from the press clubs, following the neutrality principle. As a result, the media often passively relay the agenda of the sources, reflecting the interests of the elite and imposing them on the general public. Moreover, while Japan's mass media occasionally play an active role in directing public attention to important issues, the coverage tends to be restricted to valence issues, such as corrupt public officials or political scandals. Consequently, the Japanese media mostly influence public opinion by reporting political problems in a moralistic and affective manner. Kabashima and Broadbent (1986) call this type of media influence "referent power."

Media effects identified in Japanese media studies are essentially consistent with the idea of referent power. It seems reasonable to assume that Japanese people ultimately change their opinions and behavior, not through directly accepting the assertions in media messages, but through estimating the climate of opinion or public atmosphere from the tone of the media and accommodating their behavior to the climate of opinion. Moreover, some scholars studying social networks in Japan tend to regard interpersonal networks as a kind of environmental force, thus assuming that unwitting exposure to that environment

engenders conformity (Ikeda, 2000). However, further research will be necessary to ascertain the validity of this environmentalist explanation of the media and personal influence.

Changes in the political role of the Japanese mass media occurred in the early 1990s. The one-party system ruled by the LDP collapsed in 1993 and the number of uncommitted voters has dramatically increased in subsequent years. Today, the choices of Japanese voters are more likely to be determined by short-term factors such as issues and the candidate's image rather than by stable party support. Consequently, the media's potential for influencing voting behavior in Japan has increased significantly. This is particularly evident in the redesigned television news programs and talk shows, which were launched by commercial broadcasters in the late 1980s to compete with the traditional "fact-only" news by the public broadcaster NHK (Krauss, 2000). These programs became hugely successful in the 1990s and sell interpretive, sometimes scathing, comments by popular anchors. It is an intriguing question whether these news programs represent the emergence of novel watchdog journalism or whether they are just variants within the framework of Japan's conventional neutrality principle.

With the success of these new forms of television journalism, Japanese politics has (at last) entered the television age (Krauss, 2002). One might find it odd and outdated to encounter such a statement in a time when the demise of mass media and the rise of the Internet are announced everywhere. Japan, like other East Asian and Western countries, has witnessed the rapid diffusion of the Internet for the past decade; however, political use of the Internet is not yet well developed in Japan. This is partly due to the fact that Internet campaigns by political parties and candidates in Japan are still severely restricted by law during the formal campaign period. However, this situation will change soon as more citizens and politicians are clamoring for revision of the legal restrictions.

The relationships between the media and politics in Japan have changed slowly but steadily during the past five decades. Whether these changes will improve or degrade the quality of Japan's democracy is a crucial question for future research to address.

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Chapter 8

Political Communication in Korea

Looking Back for the Future

Sung Tae Kim and Hyok Nam Kwon[1]

South Korea (hereafter Korea) has a fairly strong research tradition in the field of mass communication, but most Korean communication studies have not been published in English. Thus, a majority of the trends and findings of Korean communication research are unknown to scholars in other countries. However, this situation is slowly changing mostly because of the rapidly growing number of Korean students that are enrolled in U.S. and European communication programs. In addition, growing numbers of Korean research studies are being published in English-language journals and more papers have been presented at international conferences such as the annual meetings of the International Communication Association (ICA) or the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

History of Political Communication Research in Korea

While politics in Korea has changed dramatically during the 20th century, Korea's mass media have been under tight political control during most of that time. In fact, most governments that have ruled Korea since World War II have tried to control the mass media more or less directly. During the 1950s, for example, President Rhee continued the military government's "Ordinance Number 88," which outlawed leftist newspapers, and allowed him to closed moderate newspapers and arrest reporters and publishers on numerous occasions until 1960. Similarly, under President Park Chung Hee (1961–1979), the Korean government exercised considerable control and surveillance over the mass media through the comprehensive National Security Act. Throughout his regime, Park's government strictly controlled the media by using the Press Ethics Commission Law and, after 1972, emergency decrees that penalized criticism of the government. In 1974, the government ordered the firing of a number of journalists and used the Korean Central Intelligence Agency to force the newspaper *Dong-A Ilbo* to stop its reporting about the growing opposition to the Park government by intimidating the paper's advertisers.

In 1980, President Chun Doo Hwan's (1980–1987) government established even more thorough control of the news media than had existed previously.

Independent news agencies were absorbed into a single government-run agency, numerous provincial newspapers were closed, and independent broadcasting agencies were absorbed into the state-run Korean Broadcasting System (KBS). The Basic Press Act of 1980 was the legal capstone of President Chun's system of media control. By the mid-1980s, censorship of print and broadcast media had become one of the most widely and publicly criticized acts of the Chun government. The 1987 presidential election, regarded as the first democratic nationwide election in Korea, played a crucial role in democratizing the Korean society and the mass media. It is therefore understandable that until the latter half of the 1980s, communication studies were mostly limited to the introduction of communication theories and research findings from Western countries. A Korean approach to communication research simply did not exist at that time.

The election of President Roh Tae Woo in 1987 and the simultaneous implementation of a revised Constitution was a watershed for Korea's political communication studies. The "June 29 Declaration of Political Reforms," in which Roh acceded to all of the opposition's demands, ended all institutional and noninstitutional interference in press activities and guaranteed press freedom. The democratization of Korean politics was soon followed by a liberalization of the economy, society, and culture—a crucial turning point in Korean history that encouraged political communication scholars to initiate new research studies.

If, however, the political environment in Korea had been liberated in the late 1980s, why was there still such a small amount of political communication research published in Korea? Based on our experience as Korean communication researchers, we believe that the lack of Korean-based political communication studies is mainly due to three distinct historical factors: (1) a lack of democratic elections in Korea until 1987; (2) public mistrust of the mass media in general; and (3) political regionalism, which made a unified research approach difficult.

First, the rampant dictatorship, which characterized Korea's political situation until 1987, strictly limited political communication studies. Until the first democratic presidential election in 1987, Korea's elections did not take place in a democratic manner. Corruption was prevalent during most local and national elections before 1987. In such a political situation, scientific research about elections was futile. Furthermore, Korean scholars lacked the freedom to conduct objective and systematic research, thus further decreasing the chance for more election-related studies.

Second, public mistrust of the mass media, especially television, was widespread before 1987. While newspapers constituted the most dominant and mainstream medium in Korea until the 1970s, television consumption level peaked during the 1980s and emerged as the dominant medium for the public. But because the executive boards of the KBS and the Munhwa Broadcasting Company (MBC)—the two primary broadcasting stations that bisected the TV market of the 1980s—were authorized by the government, Korean television became an extension of the undemocratic government. The television stations' news was awash with progovernment propaganda and had a complete loss of credibility

among the Korean public. By 1984, many Koreans expressed their dissatisfaction with the public broadcaster KBS by simply refusing to pay the mandatory license fee.

While the Korean government and the ruling party maintained control over the press, the opposition party sought to influence the public through large-scale political meetings that encouraged a proopposition party atmosphere. The public, which mistrusted the media, embraced such rallies and direct encounters with opposition leaders as opportunities to gain political knowledge. Of course, this complicated mix of interaction between the government, the public, and the opposition through media and public gatherings made it extremely difficult for political communication scholars to isolate and investigate the political role of the mass media.

Third, voting patterns influenced by regionalism were deeply rooted within Korean political society. As a concept that best portrays Korea's political culture, it is used to indicate regional conflict, opposition, confrontation, sentiments, and supremacy. Thus, Korean regionalism should not be understood as a positive affection for one's home town and regional cooperation, but in terms of detachment, antagonism, conflict, and collective selfishness. Whereas positive functions of regionalism, such as local patriotism, from time to time bolster regional development and integration, the negative characteristic of Korean regionalism has caused serious political problems. Especially during election campaigns, regionalism has been expressed through unconditional antagonism toward candidates from different regions in Korea and hopelessly blind support for local candidates. As a consequence, most political candidates in Korea have sought ballots through the manipulation of the public's feelings of regionalism as the most effective way to capture supportive votes.

Major Trends of Political Communication In Korea

There are currently 10 journals devoted to communication research published in Korea. Based on importance and circulation, three prestigious journals were selected for this content analysis: the *Korean Journal of Journalism and Communication Studies* (KJJCS), the *Korean Journal of Broadcasting and Telecommunication Studies* (KJBTS), and the *Korean Journal of Communication and Information Studies* (KJCIS). The KJJCS was first published in 1970 and is now the most recognized communication journal in Korea. Based on a complete analysis of all three journals, we collected a total of 45 political communication studies, including 24 studies from the KJJCS, 12 from the KJBTS, and nine from the KJCIS.

Research Topics

Based on our content analysis, it is safe to conclude that research topics in Korea have been relatively diverse. As shown in Table 8.1, the majority of political communication studies covered Korean election campaigns and voting patterns. A

Table 8.1 Korean Political Communication Research by Subject (N = 45)

Subjects	*Studies*	*Percent*
Election Campaigns & Voting Patterns	Jung (1970); Ahn & Choi (1990); Baek (1996); Lee (1999); Kim, J.Y. (2000); Kim & Kim (2000); Park (2001); Rhee (2001); Ku (2002); Kim, C.S. (2002); Lee (2002); Ku (2003); Ban (2004); Lee, Kim, Yang, & Kwon (2004); Lee, Kim, Kim, & Chung (2005)	33.3%
Relationship between Media and Government	Lee, Hong, & Kwon (1979); Choi (1998); Jung (1998); Park & Chang (2000); Cho (2001); Cho (2002)	13.3%
Information Processing	Park (1999); Rhee (2000); Lee (2003); Lee & Hur (2004); Ban, Choi & Shin (2004)	11.1%
Political Talks on Television	Kim (1997); Song & Ann (2002); Jung (2003); Song (2003); Lee (2004)	11.1%
Media Reporting of Political Issues	Park (1992); Baek (1997); Kwon (1998); Kwon (1999); Kim (2005)	11.1%
Internet/New Media	Kim, C.S. (2000); Hwang (2001); Kang (2004); Park (2004)	8.9%
Public Opinion Research	Kwon (1991); Hwang & Lee (2000); Park & Lee (2004)	6.7%
Other	Hong, Kim, Han, & Lee (1980); Hong (2002)	4.5%
Total		100%

Note: Only primary subjects were counted. Percentages are rounded.

distant second topic is media and government relations, followed by voters' processing of political information, televised debates, and the political role of the Internet in elections. Topics that received less coverage included public opinion research and political propaganda in advertising. Overall, nearly half of the political communication research published in Korea focuses on studies of elections.

According to our analysis, the pioneer of Korea's political communication research is Jung Dae Soo, who first published his research in 1970. Jung (1970) analyzed each party's political propaganda methods during the dictatorial 1967 presidential election. His study focused on the party propaganda printed in the progovernment newspapers *Seoul Shinmun* and the proopposition newspaper *Donga Ilbo* during the official election campaign. Based on a content analysis of election coverage in these two newspapers, Jung suggested the following characteristics of political news coverage during the 1967 election: (1) a positive outlook among the candidates after coming into office; (2) images of corruption;

(3) a fostering of integration between the parties and the public; (4) the use of negative symbols; and (5) political critique.

The first systematic study focusing on election campaigning, however, was published 20 years later by Ahn and Choi (1990). In an extensive investigation of how the media might affect voters during the 1987 presidential election, the authors conducted nationwide field interviews with 1,200 respondents during the first democratic election in 16 years. According to Ahn and Choi (1990), respondents indicated that television programs reinforced their political ideas and beliefs; however, only one-third of the respondents said that television helped them to make up their minds about who to vote for. The researchers concluded that the mass media did not have a significant political impact due to voters' selective exposure and perception.

With the increasing importance of modern communication technologies in recent years and number of studies have analyzed the impact of the Internet on political processes in Korea (Hwang, 2001; Kang, 2004; C. S. Kim, 2000; Park, 2004). Hwang (2001), for example, investigated how the Internet might promote political participation among Korean voters. Based on the assumption that political Internet resources will be used primarily to reinforce citizens who are already politically well-connected, educated, and motivated through traditional mass media or grassroots activism, the study found that increased communication via the Internet raises the degree of political participation in general. In a similar study, Kang (2004) examined the extent to which citizens participated in civic and political affairs. According to the findings, online information retrieval and exchanges of opinion were positively associated with civil and political activities.

Theories Used

Next, we will examine the theories that have been employed in Korean political communication studies. Overall, about three-quarters of the 45 studies analyzed (73.3%) tested a specific communication theory or hypothesis—or at least relied on communication theories for their primary arguments. In other words, most political communication research in Korea is explicitly theoretical in nature. Theories mentioned or applied most frequently in these studies included censorship or press control (15.2%), information processing (12.1%), semiotics and framing (12.1%), agenda setting (9.1%), uses and gratifications (6.1%), propaganda (6.1%), news diffusion (3%), and gate-keeping theory (3%).

The fact that the most frequently applied political communication theory was censorship and press control is likely related to Korea's political history, which has been characterized by the division of North and South Korea and the long-lasting military dictatorship. Jung's (1998) study of the relationship between government and press, for example, is based on her analysis of media control of different political regimes in Korea. She concludes that the press control of the 1990s stems from the collusion of politics and capital. In other words, while

president Kim Young Sam's rule did not include formal control of the media, he indirectly controlled the media with internal and external pressures directed at the press.

More specific communication theories such as media framing and agenda-setting were also frequently applied (Ban, 2004; Y. J. Kim, 2000; Ku, 2002; Lee, 2002; Park, 2004). Based on his analysis of news and strategy frames on political distrust and political efficacy, Lee (2002) reported that strategy frames could have important effects on the public's political feelings and level of cynicism. Similarly, Y. J. Kim's (2000) analysis of public opinion about the abortion issue between 1972 and 1982 concluded that individuals construct different realities based on what they perceive in the mass media.

Methods Used

Previous studies, which examined research trends in the United States, have reported that more quantitative than qualitative research articles have been published in the communication field (Cooper, Potter, & Dupagne, 1994; Kim & Weaver, 2002; Perloff, 1976; Weaver, 1993). Similarly, this analysis found that quantitative analyses constitute the majority of research methods adopted by Korean political communication researchers.

Overall, among the 45 political communication studies that were published in the three analyzed Korean communication journals since 1960, 28 were based on quantitative methods (62%) while 17 were qualitative in nature (38%). Among the quantitative methods used most often were surveys (40%), content analysis (17.8%), and experiment and secondary data analyses (both 2.2%). The most frequently employed qualitative methods, on the other hand, are literature reviews of political issues or bibliographies (26.7%). Other qualitative methods used in Korean political communication studies include discourse analysis (8.9%) and Q-methodology (2.2%).

According to our findings, content analyses were the dominant method for political communication studies until the 1970s. Most of these studies, however, were based on simple calculations rather than more sophisticated statistical analyses. The first scientific survey analysis was conducted by Hong, Kim, Han, and Lee (1980), who questioned Korean immigrants living in the Los Angeles metropolitan area about their view of Korea's internal security following the assassination of President Park Jung Hee in 1979. One of the first examples of sophisticated qualitative analyses found in Korean political communication is a study by Park (1992), who investigated the impact of political comics or cartoons on people's perceptions. Using Q-methodology, the author concluded that by participating in a political drama through exposure to political comics or cartoons, the audience comes to share a number of important political images. He also found that these political images can positively influence people's voting decision in elections.

Media Bias in Political News Coverage

One of the distinct characteristics of political communication research in Korea is the dominance of studies focusing on media content. In this section, we would like to point out the main problems of media bias that have been identified in political news coverage in Korea.

The persistent imbalances found in Korean news coverage have motivated a number of communication scholars to examine the fairness of the newspaper and television election coverage. While recent elections, especially since 1987, have been covered with less bias in the Korean news media, a large portion of television content is still skewed toward the ruling party. The 1987 presidential election, for example, was notorious for the manipulation of candidate images, especially on television. As shown in research by Kwon (1999), the ruling party candidate, Noh Tae Woo, was usually portrayed in a bright and relaxed manner. In contrast, the opposition party candidate, Kim Young Sam, was frequently shown as stiff in appearance, with signs of fatigue and anxiety. Similarly, Kim Dae Jung, another opposition candidate, was portrayed as starchy, with a scowl, and a coarse voice. Noh's campaign setting was portrayed as clean and orderly, while images of chaos and violence dominated the opposition party's campaign (Kwon, 1999). In addition, language favorable to Noh such as "unanimous and fervent cheers," "surging crowd of people," and "culminating atmosphere" were commonly employed. Television stations evaluated the ruling party's public nomination as "well distributed according to region, generation, and profession," but provided a negative assessment for the opposing party's public nomination by stating that it is a "rebellion of a number of influential figures leading to internal conflict" (Kwon, 1999). Overall, most studies have shown that the ruling party's leaders and candidates are mostly portrayed in a positive and harmonious way, while the opposition party is shown more often in negative scenes that include internal and external conflict (Kwon, 2002).

Based on a review of Korean elections studies conducted by Kwon (1991, 1998, 1999, 2002), the following eight types of political biases have been identified in the Korean media:

1. *Manipulation of sound effects*: In the 1992 presidential election, the quality of recordings of the third-party candidate's voice showed manipulations resulting from intentional negligence. The voice of the ruling party candidate, Kim Young Sam, was transmitted clearly with no background noise, but it was hard to understand the opposition party candidates, Kim Dae Jung and Jung Joo Young, because of heavy background noise.

2. *Priming effects of the media*: Priming effects focus on issues and incidents that directly or indirectly relate to the candidate's evaluation by inducing positive evaluations of a party candidate. During the 1987 presidential election, for example, the Korean media amplified coverage of the Korean Air Line airplane explosion. Similarly, during the 1992 presidential election, the Lee Sun Sil spy incident was brought to public attention.

3. *Press intimidation tactics*: Throughout the most recent presidential elections that took place between 1987 and 1997, the Korean media frequently intensified confrontational situations among candidates by reporting experiences, positions, and strengths of possible candidates even before their public nomination. It has been common for the Korean media, for example, to hold competitive television debates with preliminary candidates from each party almost 12 months before the actual election. In doing so, the media instigated competition and anxiety among candidates. Ironically, the media then turned to criticize the election process with headlines such as "overheated election" and "corrupt election," blaming the candidates for the excessive election campaigns.

4. *Emphasis on gossip and sketch news*: The most frequent reporting pattern during the election period is the use of gossip or sketchy news, which frequently sensationalizes election coverage with comments aimed at goading candidates or party spokespersons to slander each other. During the 1987 general election, about 69% of the televised election coverage was gossip or articles that simply delivered news about the campaign trail or the political atmosphere. Straight political news followed at about 26%, while in-depth interpretive or investigative reports comprised only about 5% of all televised election news.

5. *Strategic confrontation coverage*: Throughout the 1997 presidential election, competition among the various candidates was extremely intense and the press fanned this competition by releasing information about each candidate's campaign strategy. Due to excessive competition among the Korean media itself, there also have been frequent incidents of reporting unconfirmed and anonymous rumors about the political candidates. Political labels like "a bird from the North," "millions of won hidden away," or "spy," were examples of repeated rumors about the main political candidates that appeared in the Korean press during the 1997 election.

6. *Horse-race coverage*: Like many other countries, a pressing problem in Korea's election campaign coverage is the predominance of horse-race coverage. The analyses of television news during the 1997 presidential election revealed that about 42% of the total political news dealt with the candidates' election campaign. In addition, about 21% related to the campaign tour of the party leaders, and about 11% was campaign reports related to election campaigns and the candidates strategies. In total, only about 5% of the 1997 televised election coverage focused on the candidates' positions regarding political issues.

7. *Dominance of negative coverage*: Election reporting in Korea often contains negative coverage of topics such as cynicism, corrupt election processes, and the public's disinterest in the elections themselves. In the 1998 provincial election, for example, about 33% of the election reporting consisted of "negative" content. However, by emphasizing corruption coupled with the Korean public's general disinterest in politics, the media might have reinforced negative public perception of politics and elections, thus furthering both disinterest and cynicism.

8. *Focus on party leaders*: Besides the dominance of negative election coverage, another problem is the focus of the Korean media on party leaders rather than

party candidates during the election campaign. According to analyses of television news during the 1998 general election, approximately 10 party leaders made daily appearances on television. More specifically, these 10 party leaders received 30% of the total election coverage, while a total of 1,389 candidates from five political parties struggled to gain the attention of the Korean mass media for the remaining election coverage.

Survey of Political Communication Scholars

In addition to the content analysis of published political communication studies in Korea, we surveyed a total of 45 members of the political communication division of the Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies. The survey was conducted via e-mail in late 2004. Two additional e-mail notes were delivered to the respondents in order to encourage completion of the questionnaires. Of the 45 members contacted, 28 responses were received and analyzed. Considering the total number of political communication scholars in Korea, the responses of 28 respondents might not perfectly represent the field, but they certainly provide some insights into what these Korean scholars think about this particular field of study.

Overall, a majority of the respondents were male (89%), in their 40s (47%), and received their final degree in the United States (65%). Three-quarters of the respondents considered their main area of teaching and research to be political communication studies. Most of the respondents' research focused on "media and election campaigns" and "public opinion" (each 19.6%) followed by "media and government" and "political talks on television" (each 13%). Other less popular topics included "political public relations/advertising" (10.9%), "political information processing" (8.7%), "media and international politics," (4.3%), "political rhetoric" (4.3%), "socialization issues," and "media and political philosophy" (each 3.3%). In short, political communication researchers in Korea are more likely to study applied topics rather than theoretical, philosophical, or historical issues.

When asked about the importance of the political communication field in journalism and mass communication studies, the responses were split: about 46% of the scholars regarded political communication as a "major" field of research in Korea, while 43% thought that it is a "minor" field. Interestingly, only about a third of respondents (28.6%) judged the quality of political communication research in Korea as "excellent," and an equal number of respondents said that it was "below average." Despite this critical view of the quality of political communication research in Korea, most of the interviewed scholars appeared satisfied with their own research. About 71% of the respondents said that they were "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with their own research and about 96% said that they plan to do more research in this area. In regard to academic productivity, the average respondent had published about four research papers and two books during the previous three years. About 57% of the respondents received research

grants for their political communication studies, while about 40% said that they have never received any types of grants for their research.

According to our survey, significant progress has been made in the development of political communication programs at universities in Korea. Among the 30 universities where the respondents have been teaching, 89% of the undergraduate programs and about 64% of the graduate programs had political communication-related courses.

The survey questionnaire also asked respondents to point out any possible problems they might perceive in the field of political communication in Korea. The most frequently mentioned problems were a "lack of diversity in topics and methods" (52.6%) and a "lack of communication between researchers to share their findings" (26.3%). Other less common problems included a "lack of political information databases," "insufficient research grants," and a "lack of academic journals for political communication."

Another major concern related to the efforts that are needed to further develop political communication research in Korea. Closely corresponding to the above mentioned communication and interaction problems, most scholars said that it was necessary "to expand academic cooperation and communication among researchers" (51.4%). In addition, respondents suggested the "construction of a political information database," "financial support or programs for consistent political communication research," "employment of more objective and systematic approaches to study political issues," and "more political communication journals."

Conclusions

This chapter examined Korea's political communication research trends starting from the 1970s. In doing so, it critically reviewed political communication studies published in three prestigious Korean communication journals and surveyed communication scholars and. Summarized below are the major findings and implications.

First, three restrictive historical factors were identified for the development of political communication research in Korea: (1) the country's political situation; (2) citizens' mistrust of the press; and (3) adversary effects of regionalism. More specifically, the repressive political environment, which dominated Korea until the 1980s, held back the development of communication studies in Korea. Clearly, the public's mistrust of the press and the deeply rooted regionalism in Korea strictly limited studies about functions and impacts of the media during elections.

Second, based on the content analysis of political communication studies conducted since the 1960s, it is clear that the most important research topics of political communication in Korea have been election campaigns and voting patterns. Moreover, about three-quarters of the analyzed studies attempted to test specific communication theory or relied on theories for their primary arguments.

This indicates that political communication research in Korea is explicitly theoretical in nature. In terms of methods, about 6 out of 10 political communication studies employed quantitative analysis methods such as survey and content analysis.

Third, our survey of Korean communication scholars identified a number of challenging problems for the field of political communication in Korea. As indicated by the answers of these scholars, continuous academic interaction among communication scholars, a systematic compilation of research data and output, and external funding, are indispensable for the future development of political communication studies in Korea. Clearly, the essence of scholarship is to conduct research and listen to the thoughts and assessment of other scholars through academic debates. The observed sluggish academic interaction among Korean communication scholars is a pressing issue and rigorous efforts to promote academic interchanges are essential. Furthermore, interactions with other academic fields such as political science, sociology, or psychology is likely to enhance political communication research because it allows the application of diverse theories and research methods for the realm of political communication.

Despite its brief history, Korea's political communication research stands at a critical point in time to establish itself as an important area of research and scholarship within the field of journalism and mass communication in Korea. Therefore, the importance of recognizing and organizing the current state of political communication research in Korea cannot be overemphasized. It is our hope is that this review of the trends in political communication research from Korea will support the efforts to foster such a development.

Note

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Chapter 9

Political Communication in India

Kavita Karan

India—The Largest Democracy in the World

India is the seventh largest country in the world and, with over a billion people, accounts for 16% of the world's population. Located in South Asia, the Indian peninsula shares its borders with China and Nepal in the north, Pakistan in the northwest, Myanmar in the east, and Sri Lanka in the south. The country is divided into 28 states and seven union territories. Each state acts as a small country by itself, with its own language, cultural systems, and ethnic groups. India also is characterized by a vast urban–rural divide, with about 70% of the people living in rural areas.

India presents a picture of unity in diversity, which is evident in its multiracial, multilingual, and multireligious society. The constitution of India officially recognizes 19 languages, but there are also more than 200 local dialects. While Hindi is spoken by about 40% of the population, English is widely used by the Indian intellectual and economic elite for national, political, and commercial communication. During the past decade, the Indian government has made concerted efforts to increase the literacy rate, which has reached 65% but still shows a large gender gap (75% among men and 54% among women). Among the various religions found in India, 80.5% of the people practice Hinduism, 13.4% practice Islam, 2.3% follow Christianity, 1.9% follow Sikhism, and small percentages follow Jainism and Buddhism (Census of India, 2001). As one of the oldest civilizations, India prides itself on its rich cultural heritage, which is steeped in mythology, history, folklore, religious festivals, dance, languages, drama, and music. These cultural forms are manifested in the social values and beliefs of most Indians, and are widely incorporated in everyday life. Interestingly, they are also part of political election campaigns, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

After gaining independence in 1947, India has remained a democratic and unified nation. Despite strong destabilizing undercurrents—including political failures, economic downturns, divisions among political parties, assassinations, cross-border terrorism, and religious uprisings—the country has survived and all political transitions have been peaceful. However, as in most other countries,

national elections in India take place in a state of intense political activity. Moreover, interactions between political candidates and India's 675 million voters must overcome large social and cultural boundaries that have to be bridged with new and traditional media channels. Since gaining independence, India has gone to the polls a total of 14 times. In each of these elections, politicians needed to communicate with voters located in vast rural and urban areas, a task that is complicated by widespread illiteracy and multiplicity of languages.

However, the way elections are conducted in India has changed over the years. In the beginning, campaigning was done by only a few political parties through public meetings, rallies, and door-to-door visits by political leaders and grassroots workers supporting the party. In the past 60 years, the numbers of parties and candidates have increased and elections have been modernized. Interpersonal channels continue to be important, but the mass media are now extensively used along with new technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones.

The frequent changes in the political systems and the emergence of a large number of national and regional parties have prompted a greater need for coordinated campaign communications. It is therefore no surprise that during the past two decades, Indian election campaigns have been characterized by a phenomenal growth in the use of traditional and new media through planned political communication strategies. Political parties in India have made extensive use of audio- and videotapes, political Web sites, and mobile phones in order to reach the younger generation. Recent elections also have been accompanied by professional public opinion polls sponsored by print and electronic media, which, in turn, have increased political interest among the Indian electorate.

Another trend in recent Indian elections has been the use of professional public relations and advertising consultants, who manage the election campaigns for media and net-savvy politicians and try to influence, persuade, entertain, and motivate Indian voters (Butler, Lahiri, & Roy, 1991, 1995; Karan, 1994; Kumar, 1991; Prasad, 2003). The Indian National Congress (INC), under the leadership of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, initiated the process of using professional marketing and advertising agencies in the 1984 general elections. By 1991 all major political parties and independent candidates in India were using professional campaign agencies and had well-defined communication strategies. Today, India's elections are characterized by carefully planned, Western-style media strategies, which focus on delivering political messages to a diverse population and try to monitor the campaign's impact through public opinion polls and focus groups.

To better understand these recent developments in India's ever changing political environment, the following three sections examine the literature on political communication strategies and voting behavior in India. The first section reviews the political and electoral system between 1947 and 2004. The second section provides an overview of the various channels of political communication used in India, such as interpersonal communication, mass mediated communication,

and new media technologies. The final section concludes with the future trends in election campaigning in India.

The Indian Parliament and the Electoral Process

The Indian parliament is modeled after the British parliamentary system and consists of the Upper House (*Rajya Sabha*) and the House of the People (*Lok Sabha*). The Upper House consists of 245 members, of which the representatives of the House of the People elect 233 members, and the president nominates 12 members. The House of the People, on the other hand, consists of 545 members, of which the electorate directly elects 543 and the president nominates two. The Indian prime minister leads the cabinet and the president is the head of the state. The state governments follow a similar system with the legislative councils and assemblies (Hurst, 2004). National and state elections are held every five years, unless unusual circumstances lead to the dissolution of parliament, at which point midterm elections are held. Since 1947, 14 general elections have been held, of which six were midterm elections.

Early studies on Indian elections, which traced the development of the electoral process, were characterized by the dominance of the Indian National Congress (Hurst, 1971; Palmer, 1975; Siriskar, 1965, 1973; Weiner & Osgood, 1975). These studies have generally focused on political development as well as government and politics in India. Paul (1990) and Ahuja (2005), for example, have analyzed the changing political and electoral system in view of the development of the multiparty system, regional parties and electoral strategies. Other studies have explored the roles of political leaders, regionalization of parties, ideology, issues, party polices, attack strategies, and voting behavior (Brass, 1984, 1990; Chandidas & Morehouse, 1968; Chaturvedi, 1981; Chaudary & Kar, 1992; Datta, 1993; Ghelot, 1992; Prasad, 1967; Prasad & Kinni, 1968).

Like in many other large democracies around the world, Indian elections face enormous logistical problems and are extremely expensive. Preparing lists of candidates, printing ballots, setting up voting booths, and, most importantly, arranging security for about 675 million voters spread throughout 543 constituencies across the country is a Herculean task. The entire election process normally takes two to three months from the time the elections are announced until the final results are declared and the new government is sworn in.

The Election Commission of India (EC) is the central body involved in the conduct of elections. The EC issues guidelines on the eligibility of candidates for contesting elections, the rules and regulations to be followed during campaigning, public meetings, rallies, and the amounts to be spent during elections. All parties need to register with the EC, which also issues election symbols to each party and independent candidate.

Successive elections have increased the efforts of the EC to conduct free and fair elections, at times requiring amendments to the Representation of Peoples Act (1951), which governs election related issues in India. In 1996, for example,

the EC modified the rules that determine what kind of candidates can participate in political elections. According to the new regulations, candidates with criminal records or with cases pending against them were not allowed anymore to run for office. As a consequence, in the 2004 elections, candidates had to submit affidavits, carrying information about their criminal past (if any), property, liabilities and educational qualifications, along with the nomination papers. Second, realizing the steep increase in the number of independent candidates in each election, the EC increased the security deposit required of all candidates, which, in turn, curtailed the number of independent candidates from almost 20% in 1996 to 3% in 2004.

During each election, the EC and the government initiate a multimedia campaign to educate voters about the conduct of free and fair polls. These public education campaigns run by the government for creating political awareness are unique to India (Karan, 1994). The campaigns are conducted through newspapers, radio, television, and posters and are generally aimed at increasing political awareness and voter participation. In addition, the campaigns seek to convince people that votes can be cast without fear (Indian elections can be violent) or under the influence of political bribery.

All citizens over the age of 18 are eligible to vote in the parliamentary and state elections. However, despite the EC's concerted efforts to increase political participation in India, only about 50 to 60% of all eligible voters actually cast their votes in each election. The single exception was in 1984, the year during which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated. Over 70% of all voters subsequently went to the polls and gave a resounding mandate to her son, Rajiv Gandhi, who served as India's fifth prime minister until his assassination in 1991. Despite problems of ballot tampering, incidents of violence at polling places, and frequent assassinations of political leaders, Indian elections generally are regarded as a significant democratic achievement (Mitra & Singh, 1999).

Political Parties and Electoral Verdicts

Most general elections in India since 1952 have produced a clear majority for the Indian National Congress (INC), which won massive majorities in the parliament as well as in most state legislatures. In the last two decades, however, the INC's dominance has been reduced as other parties have gained national presence and have been elected to power at the national and state levels (Heath & Yadav, 1999).

Analyzing the success of the INC over the years, Gupta (1985) argues that the Indian electorate expressed its faith in a leadership that could rise above party, sectarian, and personal interests, and was capable of laying the foundations of economic prosperity. The parliamentary leadership of the INC was led by three generations of the famous Nehru-Gandhi family—first by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, then his daughter Indira Gandhi, and finally her son Rajiv

Gandhi. At present the INC is led by Sonia Gandhi, widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

In the last three decades, the INC's dominance has been reduced by a significant increase in the number of national and regional parties in India. At the national level, these parties include the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxists), the Janata Dal, Bahujan Samajwadi Party, and the Samajwadi Janata Party. Prominent regional parties that have gained popularity include the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, the All India Anna Dravidra Munetra Kazagam in Tamil Nadu, the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam, and the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.

Studies that have analyzed Indian elections clearly reflect these political changes over time. Lal (1990, 1991), for example, traces the emergence of the multiparty systems, from the sectarian and dynastic rule of the Gandhi family as the prime ministers of the country to the coalition parties. Similarly, Gould and Ganguly (1993) show how the lack of majority support for a single political party and multiparty conditions have led to coalition politics and minority governments in the 1989 and 1991 general elections in India. Sarangi (2001) found that nationalist fervor in India has given way to real political governance, involving all features of bargaining, negotiations, and compromises in the coalition governments. He argues that Indian parties today are more pragmatic than ideological and focus on coalition-building. This, in turn, has prevented any one party from gaining an absolute majority to form an independent government; hence coalition politics will remain strong in India.

Emerging Strategies of Political Communication in India

Political marketing has become a major industry in which elections are planned, monitored, and managed by professional marketing, public relations, and advertising agencies (Bhoopathy, 2003; Kumar, 1991; Cwalina, Falkowski, & Kaid, 2000; Nimmo & Sanders, 1981; Sarawate, 1990; Srinivasan, 2004). As mentioned earlier, Indian elections have witnessed a phenomenal growth in media use through organized political communication strategies. Since the 1980s, political parties in India have begun hiring professional organizations to help them plan well-researched strategies that use a variety of traditional and new media outlets. Innovations in political campaigns have been especially pronounced in India's midterm elections, which have usually created a greater need for rebuilding the images of parties and leaders.

In a diverse country such as India, which historically has had relatively low levels of literacy and a limited reach of the mass media, all election campaigns that took place between the 1950s and the 1980s were interpersonal in nature. These campaigns were dominated by a large number of grassroots party workers deployed to mobilize voters through house-to-house campaigns during election times. In addition, public meetings, pamphlets, and wall writings characterized the early elections campaigns. Political candidates used to tour the country

to address public gatherings, to participate in public rallies, and to visit voters through door-to-door campaigns.

The tours of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, for example, were well known and successful. Gandhi strongly believed these tours to be the most successful way of building personal bonds with the electorate, most of whom were illiterate and did not have access to the mass media. In 1971, she built a campaign around the slogan "Eradicate Poverty" (*Garibi Hatao*), which won the hearts and votes of many Indian people. Gandhi believed that Indian voters had to see their leaders, listen to them, and judge whether they were capable leaders or not. As a result of her numerous public meetings, Gandhi directly reached and mesmerized thousands of voters throughout India in her lifetime (Brass, 1984; Mehta, 1975).

Gandhi's direct campaigning strategy continues today as many political leaders in India travel thousands of miles across the country to address huge public gatherings. During the 2004 election, for example, Prime Minister Vajpayee campaigned for 52 days and attended 104 election meetings. Similarly, BJP Deputy Prime Minister Advani addressed 250 meetings, while Congress leader Sonia Gandhi attended 60 rallies for 60 candidates (53 of whom won) (Chawla, 2004). In recent years, these political rallies have been accompanied by political campaign films or longer feature films that are screened during the public meetings (Karan, 1994).

The style of political campaigning in India changed in the 1984 elections, when Rajiv Gandhi took over the leadership of the party after the assassination of his mother. The young, Western-educated leader was convinced that a systematic, professional approach to political advertising could pay dividends. Thus, for the first time, an organized political campaign was conceived in India.

The Rediffusion Advertising agency, headed by Rajiv's close friend Arun Nanda, was entrusted with the planning of the 1984 election campaign. Intense background information was gathered on the culturally and socially complex Indian electorate and resulted in a multimedia campaign that was built around the theme of "national unity." Rajiv Gandhi's party tried to project itself as the party of national unity and integrity that could unite India, end violence and terrorism, and offer hope of development to the people. The campaign advertising exploited the public grief over the death of Indira Gandhi in a not too subtle way. Press advertisements called for unity and support, and posters showed the bullet-ridden, blood splattered body of Indira Gandhi. In addition, her recorded speeches were available throughout the country on audiocassettes distributed for free during the campaign.

The 1984 campaign also introduced the use of political films as a major communication tool. The INC-produced film *Maa* (Mother) about Indira Gandhi, for example, caused a tremendous emotional response in the electorate. Similarly, the film *Amethi Ka Suraj* (Son of Amethi, referring to Rajiv Gandhi) invited the sobbing audiences to brighten up at the prospect of her son continuing the political dynasty. To nobody's surprise, Rajiv Gandhi's party won the election

riding high on an emotional tide, gaining 415 of the 543 seats available for direct election in the House of the People (76%), and a total vote share of 48% in the parliament, the highest since the first parliamentary elections in 1952. While the sympathy factor significantly influenced the outcome of this election, Gandhi's professional media campaign was recognized by many academic observers as a central factor in his political victory (Butler, Lahiri, & Roy, 1991; Karan, 1994; Sarwate, 1990).

In the following years, election campaigns in India took a new turn. After Gandhi's media-based election success in 1984, planned advertising and marketing strategies were used extensively to reach the rural and urban electorate. As a result, political campaigns in India became more aggressive and began to resemble the American style of campaigning (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Crew & Martin, 1984; Elebash, 1984). In the run-up to the 1989 general elections, for example, Gandhi's ruling INC party introduced negative advertising as a new campaign tool in India. The campaign was based on the theme of "My Heart Beats for India" and warned of "lawlessness, communalism, disorder, and disunity" as possible consequences of a coalition government. The INC's advertisements in national and regional newspapers were intended to frighten the electorate with images of fighting cocks, broken dolls, grinning crocodiles, and barbed-wire fences—seeking to ridicule the notion that the opposition was capable of uniting politically.

The campaign backfired because the opposition actually managed to unite. When the election was held in 1989, the INC lost its 76% majority in the Upper House of the People and was reduced to only 40% of the seats. In view of other difficulties and accusations of corruption, the INC's mishandled campaign might have contributed only slightly to this huge loss; however, fingers were pointed at the small coterie of professional consultants, who might not have understood the hearts and minds of the common people.

Despite this strategic setback, negative campaigning continued to play a major role in subsequent elections in India. In the following elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) used professional campaign agencies to attack the INC, to project its own policies in a positive light, to increase public support, and to build its image as a secular national party. During the parliamentary elections in 1999, for example, the BJP attacked the origin and nationality of Sonia Gandhi and pointed out the potential consequences of having a "foreigner" as the political leader of India.

Today, all major political parties in India continue to advertise through the national and regional newspapers and magazines. As in other developed democracies, politicians set aside large funds for press campaigns, and advertising agencies pitch for these big budgets during elections as parties plan huge multimedia campaigns (Balakrishna & Rodrigues, 2004; Bhagat, 2004; Bhatia, 2004; Karan, 2000; Kota, 2004; Kumar, 1991; Midha, 2004; Nilanjan, 2004; Pande, 2004; Sarwate, 1991; Srinivasan, 2004).

New communication technologies became part of India's election campaigns

in the early 1990s. In order to reach the largely illiterate audience, particularly in the rural areas, political audio- and videocassettes were introduced in the 1991 elections (Karan, 1994; Kumar, 1991). These media-based messages were combined with interpersonal forms of communication through public meetings and rallies, national tours of candidates, and door-to-door campaigns by networks of grassroots workers. Most parties and candidates developed two or three cassettes and hundreds of copies were distributed all over the country. In later years, these audio- and videocassettes were replaced by video compact discs, which continue to be very successful in reaching India's voters (Butler et al., 1991, 1995).

With the rapid expansion of radio and television throughout India, Western-style one-minute political advertisements quickly became the norm in Indian elections during the 1990s. With big advertising budgets under their control, the INC and the BJP were able to use the mass media to reach most of the Indian electorate as commercials were aired by national, cable, and satellite channels. As a consequence of the larger media-based campaign reach, marketing strategies such as positioning, segmentations, psychographics, and brand identity became as much a part of the political lingo as swing factors, caste breakup, and voting percentage.

The 2004 general elections have been called the biggest marketing and media "blitzkrieg" the country has ever seen (Bhatia, 2004). Hi-tech messages were combined with grassroots messages. Major advertising agencies such as Grey, Madison, Precept, TBWA, and Anthem were pitching to handle huge party campaign accounts. Committees were set up by the political parties to oversee the campaigns and coordinate with the media (Bhatia, 2004; Karan, 1994; Kumar, 1991; Prasad, 2003).

Political marketing and branding has become an essential force in Indian elections, where the mass media along with other indigenously developed electronic and print forms have been used to reach a diverse Indian electorate. Overall, the use of Western-style campaign and marketing strategies has not only modernized election campaigning in India, but also contributed to India's vibrant democracy (Ahuja & Paul, 1992; Bhatia, 2004; Butler et al., 1991; Karan, 1994; Manuel, 1993; Prasad, 2003).

Indian Media and Elections

In the past decade, very few countries have experienced the impact of the communication revolution as much as India has done (Singhal & Rogers, 2001). The Indian media bridge social and cultural rifts by reaching vast audiences through new and traditional communication channels. India's newspaper industry is one of the largest in the world, catering to heterogeneous groups with numerous languages and dialects. Over 6,000 newspapers and magazines are published in about 93 languages and dialects with an overall readership of more than 60 million. While English publications are read by only about 10% of the population,

publications in Hindi, the national language, and various regional languages are much more popular (Bara, Dasgupta, & Thakur, 2003).

As in most other media systems, political news coverage dominates Indian mass media (Karan, 2006; Kumar, 2001). According to Rao (2003), Indian newspapers and television news programs continue to be "preoccupied" with politics, giving extensive coverage to politics and political issues. During elections, newspapers and magazines publish daily reports and special supplements to cover the electoral trends. The press is a major source of information for the literate and has played a major role in the fortunes of the political parties. The Indian press has been supportive, but sometimes also adversarial and critical of the Indian government (Bhoopathy, 2003; Kumar, 2001). Newspapers have played a dominant role in India's struggle for political independence, and even after independence the press has supported the government in its efforts toward nation building. The press also has served as a political watchdog and continues to report on issues of concern, failures of the government, and cases of corruption against ministers in the central and state governments (Kumar, 2000; Vohra, 2000).

The print media in India, unlike radio and television, is not under the direct control of the government and enjoys a fair share of political freedom. However, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency in 1975, freedom of the press was curtailed and censorship laws were imposed (Jeffrey, 2000; Shourie, 1987). According to some analyses (Mehta, 1992; Parthasarthy, 2001; Verghese, 1999), the excesses of the emergency and censorship laws were major factors in the defeat of the INC party in the 1977 parliamentary election.

Despite the government's attempts to control India's media between 1975 and 1977, the press continued to function as a political watchdog. For example, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was heavily attacked in the Indian press for his alleged role in the so-called Bofors gun deals, which surfaced in 1987 and became a major election issue in the 1989 parliamentary election. The story was made public by *The Hindu*, a leading south Indian newspaper, followed by other national newspapers such as *The Indian Express* and *The Statesman* (Karan, 1994; Vachani, 1999; Vohra, 2000).

The Indian press has also played an important role in the political process. Various academic observers have attributed the success of the BJP to the Hindi and English print media, which succeeded in garnering enough public support for the party to win a majority of seats in the 1989 and 1991 parliamentary election (Chhibber & Petrocik, 1990; Hansen & Jaffrelot, 2001; Mitra & Singh, 1999; Rajgopal, 2001). Other scholars have highlighted the role of the press in elections and the impact on voter behavior (Ahuja & Paul, 1992; Bhoopathy; 2003; Kumar, 1991; Prasad, 2003; Raghavan, 1999). A number of election studies found, for example, that Indian citizens have an increased level of interest in politics during elections and that they actively seek information about parties, policies, and other political issues in the mass media (Karan, 1994; Vijaypur & Balasubramanya, 2003).

The Broadcast Media

Radio and television reach about 97% of the Indian population and thus represent the most efficient form of communication with the Indian electorate. The broadcast media remained under the firm control of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting until the mid-1990s to meet the information, education, and entertainment needs of the largely illiterate Indian people. As a result, the government was able to control and ban any unwanted forms of political communication, especially political advertising, allowing the ruling party to use the broadcast media exclusively to its own advantage (Gupta, 1985). Exceptions were the party political broadcasts (PPBs), which allowed national and state parties to broadcast 15 minutes of electoral messages to present their strategies and appeal to the people. The PPB system still exists today; however, the establishment of the public Broadcasting Corporation of India (Prasar Bharati) in 1995 and the subsequent emergence of private broadcasters allowed for greater autonomy in content and functioning of Indian broadcasting media. In particular, the rapid expansion of private cable television and satellite networks has dramatically changed India's media environment (Viswanath & Karan, 2000). Major global players such as STAR, SONY, CNN, and ESPN have become household names in India, and regional and local channels such as ETV, Sun TV, and Raj TV, among others, have created their own niche, providing numerous news and entertainment programs.

As a result of this expansion of news sources, the 1998, 1999, and 2004 elections were marked by more professional finesse in the coverage of election campaigns on television. In 1999, for example, the Broadcasting Corporation of India released a 72-hour plan for comprehensive detailed, objective, and impartial coverage. Similarly, STAR launched the 24-hour news channel in India, while ZEE-TV and SONY introduced extensive election coverage. India's television broadcasts were thus converted into a potentially powerful medium for educating the illiterate, motivating and helping the politically conscious voters to exercise their franchise and to help them to make right choices. Voters were now able to follow the campaign trails of candidates, party press conferences, and analyses of election manifestos. Live debates allowed voters to scrutinize political candidates when they debated their strategies on television and radio. Prominent television anchors were hired to provide media coaching to party spokespersons and important political leaders. Political analysts, journalists, and scholars anchored television programs to analyze trends with extensive poll data, voter perceptions, and swing factors that were understood by a steadily growing and more sophisticated audience across the country (*India Today*, 2004, pp. 26–36).

In addition to the expansion of political news, major parties such as the BJP and the INC started broadcasting 30-second and 1-minute television advertisements through satellite and cable networks that reach national and international audiences (Balakrishna & Rodrigues, 2004). Large amounts of money have been spent on political advertising in recent years. During the 2004 elections, for

example, political parties spent an estimated US$12 million to broadcast political advertisements throughout India (*Outlook*, 2004). As a consequence of the large amounts of money spent on television advertising during the most recent national elections, the EC imposed restrictions on political advertising in 2004.

The Movie Industry

Until the widespread availability of television, movies used to be the most prominent form of mass entertainment in India. However, Indian movies not only served as entertainment but were also used to reach and sway voters. In recent years, a number of Indian movie and television stars have entered politics and provided glamour to the portals of state assemblies and parliament. As film stars became popular figures in Indian politics, movies became an important medium of political communication. Documentaries, features, and videos all have been used for communicating electoral strategies. The entertainment culture was brought into Indian politics as popular heroes from the movie industry became icons of politics, making music, dance, drama, and songs an important part of modern election campaigns in India (Bhoopathy, 2003; Datta, 1993; Elder & Schmittehenner, 1985; Karan, 1994, 2000).

The close connections between movies and politics in India can be traced to the south Indian states, where the most significant electoral and political developments occurred. There, movie stars such as Marudur Gopalmenon Ramachandran and Nandamuri Tarakarama Rao entered politics in Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh, respectively. In Tamilnadu, parties converted movies into campaign propaganda in the 1950s by inserting political ideologies, symbols, and allegories. Several scholars have studied this unique connection between Indian cinema and politics. Hardgrave (1975), for example, studied the growth of Tamil cinema and the steady rise of Ramachandran from cinema to politics. A similar study (Pentane, 1992) described the close association between politics and films created by Ramachandran, who often played the role of a political leader. According to Pentane (1992), people started seeing him not as an actor, but as a real life political leader, and, as a result, voted him into power. Sivathamby (1981) and Dickey (1993) studied the role of fan clubs as political entities, which actively garnered support during Ramachandran's campaigns and might have won him the office of chief minister in Tamilnadu.

A similar trend was observed in Andhra Pradesh when Rama Rao entered politics and formed the regional Telugu Desam Party in 1982. Within two years, Rao, a famous film actor who had played a variety of roles of Indian gods from the mythological Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, was elected chief minister of Andhra Pradesh (Elder & Schmittehenner, 1985; Rao, 1983). His political campaigns were theatrical and often showed clips of his movies or featured songs interspersed with election messages (Karan, 1994).

Similar trends were observed in other Indian states. Hindi film stars such as Amitabh Bachchan, Shatrughan Sinha, Vyjantimala, and Hema Malini have

been elected or nominated as members of parliament or state assemblies. With each subsequent election, several popular and not-so-popular stars entered politics as campaign supporters or actual candidates. In the 2004 elections, the BJP and the INC waged intensive lobbying campaigns to get popular movie stars to join or campaign for the party. Although these celebrities drew large crowds at election rallies and received ample media coverage, the popularity acquired from films alone could not sustain the political fortunes of many candidates or win them parliamentary seats. The results of the 1991, 1996, and 2004 elections showed that many of those who ran for public office were unable to win due to star popularity alone. In fact, most of them depended heavily on the party they represented, which was viewed positively by the electorate (Karan, 1994, 2000).

Audio and Video Cassettes

One of the promises of new media technologies is their ability to personalize mass communication by differentiating audiences through a system of "narrowcasting" (Paley & Moffett, 1984). Realizing the effectiveness of new forms of media in competing with the state-controlled radio and television, political parties developed the so-called Video-On-Wheels (VOWs) to reach the larger segment of the rural and illiterate Indian electorate. VOWs are vans fitted with large projection screens capable of showing political campaign videos that can be seen by up to 5,000 people at a time. The VOWs can be easily moved from village to village and therefore have the potential to reach audiences in even the most rural areas of India. Introduced successfully in the 1987 state elections in the northern state of Haryana, these election videos have become a very successful campaign tool nationwide.

Political videos that use an information and entertainment format are a distinctive Indian development and have contributed to campaign strategies that put entertainment before political information (Karan, 1994, 2000). Davidson (1986) describes video styles in political advertising as a combination of four factors: verbal content, nonverbal content, film production techniques, and the method of self-portrayal. VOWs have it all—they offer variety and flexibility in the form of music, dance, and drama, accentuated with shots of harmonious village life, rustic artisans happily engrossed in their work, leaders meeting people, holding babies, walking through dust laden villages listening to the grievances of the citizens. The videos are interspersed with messages about religion, history, and tales from mythology, all presented in dialects familiar to the local masses. Thus, party leaders, symbols, and policies projected through songs and drama have become an important part of political entertainment, especially in rural India (Agrawal, 1989; Ahuja & Paul, 1992; Karan, 1994; Kumar, 1991; Manuel, 1993).

Manuel (1993) explains the success of such political videos with the popularity of the film industry in India and also as an alternative to Indian television, which did not allow for any political advertising or political debate until the late 1990s.

Other scholars have argued that the positive impact of such political videos is related to the fact that they employ popular songs and drama, which are widely known among India's rural and urban audiences (Agrawal, 1989; Ahuja & Paul, 1992; Kumar, 1991; Manuel, 1993). Hence, during every election, parties and candidates make three or four videocassettes, which are duplicated, dubbed in various languages, and distributed all over the country (in recent years, they have been converted to compact discs). These recordings reach voters in the remotest areas of India, and parties have claimed that they are extremely successful campaign tools.

Videos are also a means of informative entertainment during public meetings and rallies. Screened before the arrival of political leaders (who invariably arrive late for the meetings) they help in keeping the audiences from drifting away. While videos continue to be popular, modern campaign advertising is more geared toward cable and satellite television, which is reaching an ever growing audience in India.

Political audiocassettes traditionally have been the alternative to radio-based campaigns, given the low levels of literacy and the limited scope of the print media. With the popularity of films and film songs in India, it was not long before audiocassettes were incorporated into election campaigning. Speeches of leaders and political songs played on loudspeakers atop buildings, electric poles, vehicles, and trees have been used to support the campaign and add a festive atmosphere. Both Kumar (1991) and Karan (1994) note that campaign songs tend to be parodies of popular film tunes with lyrics highlighting the qualities of leaders, parties, symbols, or policies. This is no surprise, given that popular musicians and singers from the film world are hired to write, compose music, and sing the lyrics.

Traditional Forms of Communication

Interpersonal, group, and folk forms of political communication operate alongside modern mass media. Folk forms of communication have been extensively used in India to disseminate information on social issues such as family planning, healthcare, and banking (Gargi, 1991; Malik, 1982). These include folk theater, street plays, song and dance shows, and the bandwagon technique. The bandwagon technique is especially popular for reminding the electorate of the coming elections. Cars, jeeps, and motorcycles are fitted with loudspeakers to announce the imminent elections and the parties to vote for. These bandwagons drive around Indian cities, towns, and villages to make announcements and to play political messages.

The themes of political folk theater are varied and include the messages of parties, the qualities of party leaders, and information about the parties to vote for. It is interesting to note the ease with which contemporary tales are woven into incidents of history and mythology, which are then presented in a language or dialect that is easily understood by the audiences. Moreover, this form of political

communication features greater audience involvement and participation because political information is interspersed with humor and everyday examples and due to the fact that audience members can ask questions or seek clarifications about personally relevant issues (Karan, 1994).

New Forms of Political Communication

Indian elections are usually grand, festive occasions with a wide spectrum of communication activity as the country is decked with banners, posters, and wall writings signifying the coming elections. Walls are adorned with election slogans, posters, symbol displays, and graffiti. Huge cut-outs of leaders and candidates are put up at strategic points in cities, towns, and villages in order to familiarize people with their images and party symbols (Kumar, 1991; Tekwani, 2005).

Party symbols are especially important in Indian elections because the large number of Indians who cannot read have to identify party symbols on the voting ballot paper. The party symbols vary greatly and include agricultural instruments, animals, as well as modern appliances such as telephones, ceiling fans, and pressure cookers (Kumar, 1991). Symbols usually are associated with specific religious, social, or economic ideas that are supposed to be communicated to the voter. The lotus symbol of the BJP, for example, is associated with Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, while the hand symbol of the INC is associated with power. Parties make significant efforts to popularize their symbols through posters, audio and video cassettes, wall writings, and small models of the symbols displayed at prominent places in the country, particularly in the rural and semi-urban areas (Karan, 1994).

Without question, innovative methods of campaigning have added a festive fervor to Indian elections. In recent years, merchandizing of election products has become part of the campaign as badges, flags, saris, key rings, caps, balloons, and tattoos have been distributed. However, the potential impact of these free handouts on voting behavior has yet to be analyzed and understood.

Internet and Mobile Marketing

The rapidly growing popularity of the Internet worldwide allowed political parties in India not only to reach more voters in India, but also those who live overseas. As a result, political Web sites were launched in the late 1990s to reach the more educated and wealthier voters living in India and abroad. The BJP was the first to launch a political Web site during the 1998 elections, soon followed by the official INC Web site. Political Web sites in India provide extensive details about the organization, network, and party performance, and are meant to raise membership and mobilize voters during elections. While researchers have evaluated other forms of media, the use and impact of Internet as a form of political communication in India has not been investigated yet.

The 2004 general election undoubtedly was the most hi-tech political cam-

paign ever conducted in India. Political parties used prerecorded voicemails and SMS messages from Prime Minister Vajpayee, urging them to vote for his BJP party. Overall, as many as 400 prerecorded 42-second messages were disseminated by the BJP throughout the 2004 election. Reactions to these calls ranged from very excited "Imagine the PM himself" to cynical "Does the BJP really need to do this?" (Midha, 2004). Given the tight restrictions imposed on political advertising on television and radio in India, these direct marketing strategies, which are less expensive than traditional media advertisements and can reach even illiterate voters, will be used extensively in future political campaigns.

Religion and Media

Traditionally, India's cultural system has offered a fair degree of independence to its polity, which enabled Indians to pursue political modernization without fundamentally tampering with their culture (Nuna, 1989). However, religion and castes have come to play important roles in the electoral politics and voting behavior of Indians. Deep-rooted cultural and social divisions in India have led to various political surges, such as separatist movements, caste rivalries, religious movements, and communal riots, all of which have threatened Indian democracy and integrity (Dasgupta, 2003; Engineer, 1991; Weiner, 1967). Many scholars have blamed these surges on political parties who play the game of divide and rule as they seriously weigh caste, community, religion, and regional considerations while choosing candidates. Karan (1994), analyzing the use of caste factors and religion in the 1991 general elections, called it a "cultural political system."

Thus, unlike in Western democracies, where mostly economic issues determine elections, many Indian elections have been influenced by social and cultural factors. Eldersveld and Ahmed (1978) found that political behavior and support for parties in India was clearly demarcated by cultural and social factors such as factional politics, caste, and religion (see also Brass, 1965, 1984; Karan, 1994). Gupta (1985) claimed that the 1984 election indicated a weakening of caste and communal factors in India's political system because of years of urbanization and modernization. However, Prasad (1991), reviewing the post-1989 election, found that with the changes in the political system and the decline of the one-party system, political parties resorted to the division of society through the arousal of primordial factors such as caste and religion. Although a large number of socioeconomic variables have been associated with voting behavior, caste and religion remain the dominant factors affecting voting preferences in India (Brass, 1984; Karan, 1994; Weiner & Osgood, 1975).

It is therefore not surprising that political parties in India have used religious symbols during most recent elections (Chaturvedi & Chaturvedi, 1991; Hardgrave, 1975). Between 1989 and 1990, for example, the BJP successfully mobilized the Hindus through the Indian pilgrimage *Rath Yatra* and the promise of constructing the temple at Ram Janmabhoomi, claimed to be the birthplace

of Hindu deity Lord Rama. The BJP campaign triggered a new phase of Indian nationalism and garnered political support from Hindus all over India (Graham, 1990; Murlidharan, 2003).

Religious references also are widely incorporated in party advertisements. Religious leaders from important Hindu and Muslim shrines are sought for their views, comments, and predictions, which are then published in national newspapers and magazines. In addition, parties often display huge cut-outs of political leaders, which depict them as gods from the Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharatha (Karan, 1994).

Public Opinion Polls

The introduction of modern campaign strategies in India was also accompanied by the emergence of public opinion polling. The scientific use of opinion polls, introduced in the 1984 elections, has now become an essential tool for predicting election trends and poll outcomes in India (*India Today*, 2004; Kumar, 1991; *Pitch,* 2004; Thakur, 1996). Several research organizations, including the Indian Market Research Bureau, the Marketing and Advertising Research Group-Operations Research Group, A.C. Nielsen, and the Centre for Media Studies, have been actively involved in conducting nationwide surveys and exit polls in India. In 2004, the parties and the media spent over US$2.5 million on opinion polls (*India Today*, 2004). As in other democratic nations, polls in India have helped media users to better analyze party appeals, shifts in opinion among certain voter groups, and gains and losses for parties depending on local and regional concerns of caste and religious dynamics (Butler et al., 1991; Srivastava, 1992; Trikha, 1998).

Media and Election Studies in India

The first two decades of studies on Indian elections concentrated on political parties and leaders, ideology, issues, party policies, campaigns, and voting behavior (Brass, 1984; Prasad, 1967; Prasad & Kinni, 1968; Varma et al., 1973). Early elections studies are characterized by the dominance of a single party (the INC), while others cover the field of voting behavior in the parliamentary and assembly constituencies. These studies considered the support of a particular party to be a "dependent phenomenon" and have tried to explain it with a number of socioeconomic variables, such as the primordial influences of family and kinship, caste and community, and the more standard factors of age, sex, education, class, income, and rural–urban composition of the population. In addition, these studies covered campaign strategies along with the electoral process, ideology, and political issues (Ghelot, 1992; Hurst, 1971; Palmer, 1975; Siriskar, 1965, 1973; Weiner & Osgood, 1975). In recent years the role of money, coercion, and allurements in securing electoral victories has been highlighted. The interplay of these

factors is considered crucial in understanding the patterns of electoral support and political leadership (Suri, 2006)

Pattabhiraman (1967) documented a consistent rise in political awareness, efficacy, sophistication, and involvement among voters in the early years of Indian independence. Pathak (1992), analyzing electoral behavior during the 1967 general election, concluded that a high degree of exposure to campaigns, rising levels of information, and belief in the electoral process were the main features explaining voting behavior in the state of Gujarat. Similarly, it has been noted that Indian voters demonstrate a relatively high degree of party identification and generally show a well-developed cognitive awareness of the immediate political environment. Other scholars have described Indian voters as "mature," with a good understanding of the political system, but, at the same time, influenced by cultural factors of caste and religion and emotions in terms of crises and political assassinations (Prasad, 1991).

Varma and Bhambri (1967), assessing the campaign techniques and propaganda themes of the 1962 general elections, revealed that there was a greater political consciousness among rural compared to urban voters. In urban areas, newspapers were most sought after, while rural people depended on grassroots workers, rallies, and public meetings of candidates and leaders. A later study by Bhambri and Varma (1976) confirmed that urban voters were less interested in the political process compared to rural voters and many refrained from voting.

The early elections campaigns in India, which concentrated on public meetings and door-to-door campaigning, found a dependence on such forms for election information, which, in turn, correlated with support for the INC party. Kaur's (1989) study of voters in Hyderabad, on the other hand, found that newspapers were the main source of information for 77% of the respondents. Men generally showed more political awareness than women and more than half of the respondents were likely to vote for the INC. A similar study of voting behavior among Indian industrial workers revealed that a high level of campaign exposure was associated with a higher level of political awareness, but no such positive relationship was found between campaign exposure and voter turnout (Chaudary & Kar, 1992).

With the growth of mass media in India during the 1980s and 1990s, political awareness among Indians began to increase with exposure to more extensive political media coverage (Chaturvedi, 1981; Dua, 1999; Chaudary & Kar, 1996; Karan, 1994; Kumar, 1991; Madhavi, 2003). A number of political communication studies found that parties had developed "publicity committees" with largely young members, which reviewed and supervised the campaign efforts, selected advertising agencies and research organizations, and implemented new technologies such as audio- and videocassettes, compact discs, or the Internet (Karan, 1994, 2000; Kumar; 1991; Midha, 2004; Sarwate, 1990).

Recent election studies reflect these new trends in political campaigning. Vakil (1994), for example, found a high level of political awareness among modern Indian voters who are not led astray by incentives and false promises of political

leaders, who carefully seek information from mass and interpersonal sources, and who exercise their discretion in making choices between parties. Similarly, Karan's (1994) analysis of the 1991 elections found high levels of interest in the elections as citizens followed campaigns in the media, particularly through newspapers and television. Interpersonal communication was an important factor in voting decisions when candidates and political workers approached people though door-to-door campaigns or public rallies and meetings. While older citizens voted based on previous support for the party, younger voters did not follow the same trend. The study also found that families usually voted as units, while women showed a greater inclination toward the BJP. Madahvi (2003), who studied the influence of mass media on voting behavior among women, found a high level of exposure to political campaigns through various types of mass media. She also found a positive correlation between political awareness, age and voting.

Overall, it is clear that the combined impact of the mass media, interpersonal communication, and new communication technologies has increased the level of political awareness, interest, and participation among Indian voters. Recent political campaigns based on multimedia message and integrated marketing strategies have increased political interest among many voters in India, while other, yet unexplored factors also seem to influence their behavior at the polls.

Conclusions

As this chapter has shown, cultural and economic diversity, along with the prevalent rural–urban divide, influences the way political communication strategies are defined and implemented in India. Political parties have evolved strategies to win over voters by reaching them through various traditional and innovative communication technologies. In a country that is greatly fragmented by region, religion, caste, community, and rural–urban divides, parties have learned how to select political candidates and the most appropriate media in order to mobilize public support. What makes Indian elections unique is the multiplicity of communication channels, which range from the traditional beating of drums to hi-tech advertising through the Internet or mobile phones.

Early campaigns that took place between the 1950s and late 1980s used interpersonal forms of communications, which were characterized by networks of grassroots workers deployed to mobilize voters through door-to-door campaigns and public rallies. The recent political changes and rapid development and expansion of media systems in India have influenced the way political leaders communicate with the electorate. Until the end of Indira Gandhi's regime, traditional interpersonal forms of political communication were popular, as leaders toured the country addressing huge crowds of potential voters. Personal campaigns still continue today, but public meetings now include screenings of political and entertainment films and the use of closed-circuit television which allow the attending crowd to have a closer look at the candidates.

The modernization of Indian election campaigns through the systematic use

of mass media and research for developing campaign strategies can be attributed to Rajiv Gandhi, who successfully campaigned for prime minister of India in 1984. The Cambridge-educated politician believed that a systematic and well-planned election also would create a favorable attitude for the party among the voters. Marketing and advertising professionals were hired to plan and manage the campaigns. By 1991, all campaigns were professionally managed as parties used advertising and marketing agencies that sought a share of the big advertising budgets that were being spent by political parties.

Political parties in India have used technology and innovative methods in reaching the electorate through audio- and videotapes, Web sites, and mobile phones to reach a younger generation of Indian voters. In contrast to other democracies around the world, Indian election campaigns truly became part of the entertainment culture, where the strategy was first to entertain and then to inform. The goal in these campaigns has been to entertain the electorate with political film clips, to project political leaders as gods from mythological epics, and to organize songs and dances conveying election messages to persuade people to vote.

The easing of government controls on television and radio in the late 1990s, which was accompanied by the emergence of international satellite and cable channels, have allowed a more diverse and free political debate in the Indian broadcast media. At the same time, political advertising was introduced to the Indian electorate. Major Indian parties, especially the BJP and the INC, have used extensive television advertising campaigns that have been watched by millions of Indian voters. In 2004, it was estimated that parties spent about 50% of their total advertising budget on television advertising (*Pitch*, 2004).

Interesting political communication strategies have been used as new technologies became available to campaign managers. The BJP was the first to introduce a party Web site, followed soon by all other parties. The most recent development has been the use of mobile phone technology. In the 2004 elections, SMS and telephone messages became important campaign tools. There is clearly a need to investigate the impact of such new communication technologies especially because they represent a relatively cheap and direct way for political campaigns to reach voters throughout India.

Though India has presented a wide variety of campaigning tactics, studies on political communication in India have not been exhaustive. However, the Indian media enjoy a fair degree of freedom and have largely concentrated on politics and political developments in the country. Early studies in India focused less on the campaigning styles of political candidates, which were largely interpersonal in nature, but on pressing election issues such as poverty, corruption, or cultural and religious divisions in India. Concerted efforts to study political communication during elections began in the mid-1980s, when political campaigns became professionally managed and mass media began to be used extensively for political advertising. Though India presents a vibrant democracy, with extensive use of traditional and mass media channels, the recent literature has focused largely on

the uses of mass communication channels during elections. Given the diversity of media used in Indian elections, more studies will be necessary to better evaluate the impact of media in Indian elections.

However, the outcome of elections is also dependent on the political communication that takes place during the nonelection times, especially in rural India, where over 60% of the electorate lives. Here, the interaction of interpersonal communication, the mass media, and traditional media such as folk theater needs to be explored in more detail. In the course of studying political communication during the 1991 and 1999 elections, for example, the author of this chapter observed the importance of networking through party supporters, family, and cultural factors of caste and religion that are extremely important in the selection of political candidates and the final vote.

In conclusion, monitoring Indian elections is a massive yet interesting exercise because it reflects the extreme diversity of the country. Political campaigns in India reflect a society that is characterized by the very modern and the very traditional, making it necessary to employ multiple campaign channels to reach an extremely diverse audience. Indian elections have kept up with the times and have used new communication technologies to reach the electorate. However, the Internet and SMS have yet to become accessible to the average Indian voter. While the Internet may represent a powerful political tool with which to reach the Indian elite and Indians living overseas, most Indians still depend on radio and television to get their news and information. Future studies will need to focus on the changes these new campaigning techniques have initiated in the Indian electorate. Given the challenges of global societies, Western and Asian media researchers are likely to learn much from the way political communication is developing in India during the 21st century.

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Chapter 10

The Big Unknown

Conclusions about Political Communication in Asia

Lars Willnat and Annette Aw

We began working on this book after realizing that we knew very little about the relationship between media and politics in Asia. While there is a fairly developed literature on Asian politics and business, studies on political communication issues in Asia are surprisingly limited both in scope and number. This scarcity of research is even more surprising given the fact that many Asian nations have gained great economic and political significance in the past decades. China and India, for example, have become powerful nations with worldwide economic and political influence. Even smaller Asian nations, such as Singapore or Malaysia, have assumed important international roles and frequently influence world politics. Since many of these Asian nations have well-developed media systems, it is difficult to understand why there are so few studies that investigate the interaction of media and politics in these countries. The most baffling example for this lack of research might be India. How is it possible that there are hardly any studies that analyze political communication processes in India—the world's largest democracy? For more than half a decade, hundreds of millions of Indian voters have gone to the polls every four years, yet we know virtually nothing about the role of the media in these massive elections. A similar, but somewhat less glaring lack of political communication research can be found in other Asian nations with vibrant media systems and relatively long traditions of free elections, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Some of the answers to these questions can be found in the history and in the political systems that have defined many Asian nations. The academic field of political communication has its roots in Western societies and, in most cases, has flourished in countries that have had longer experiences with free elections and democracy. In contrast, some Asian nations, such as Singapore and Malaysia, are still ruled by authoritarian governments that do not encourage critical research on the interaction of politics and media within their borders. Researchers in China and Singapore, for example, cannot conduct public opinion polls that investigate people's perceptions of political leaders or candidates. The same has been true, until recently, in Malaysia and Indonesia. This situation is often compounded by limited financial and institutional support, inadequate numbers and quality of research personnel, and a general lack of private telephones

in many Asian countries, which makes it difficult to conduct representative surveys.

The small number of political communication studies originating in Asia also can be explained by differences in the political systems themselves, which make it difficult to apply theories of media effects developed in Western democracies. The procedures of how political candidates are chosen and elected in Asia, the way people participate in politics, and how political information is discussed in the media, all differ significantly from political processes in Western nations. Because most political communication theories have been developed to fit the political systems of Western nations, it is hardly surprising that fewer studies in Asia analyze the role of the media in elections and in public opinion formation.

The Need for a Broader Perspective

The general lack of Asian communication studies indicates that political communication processes in Asia are still poorly understood within the international community of media scholars. This unsatisfactory situation is perpetuated by the fact that the understanding of politics and communication is often based on assumptions that have been shaped by Western traditions and ways of thinking. Some scholars believe that this has resulted in a situation where "analysts in the West rarely share the philosophical assumptions necessary to fully appreciate political discourse in non-Western nations" (Kluver, 2004, p. 118). Others agree that research on political communication arising from Asian contexts is largely irrelevant to the international networks of scholars examining these issues (Willnat & Aw, 2004).

It is obvious, though, that the rapid globalization has brought changes to the field of political communication that have forced even the most ethnocentric scholars to acknowledge that there is a world beyond North America and Europe. The Internet and other global media systems have created a worldwide audience for news and information from Asia, and, as a result, have brought us all closer to nations that used to be unfamiliar and strange. The violent suppression of demonstrating monks by the Burmese junta in September 2007, for example, showed that even simple communication technologies, such as mobile phones with cameras, can effectively undermine a government's efforts to impose censorship and limit international exposure. As a result, we all participated live in the tragic events that took place in Burma in 2007. While we can only speculate about the political consequences of this incident, it seems safe to assume that the pictures and videos of government soldiers killing peacefully demonstrating monks have had a devastating effect on the international image of Burma's military junta. Thus, political events that take place in Asia have profound international effects that cannot be ignored anymore.

Many media scholars, of course, have recognized this growing political, economic, and cultural interaction between "East" and "West" and have begun to study political media effects in a more international context. According to the

Japanese media scholar Miike Yoshitaka (2007), "[c]ommunication theory today is on the threshold of the multicultural turn. New ideas and different perspectives interrogate and challenge Eurocentrism in communication research. They call for multicultural scholarship that encourages non-Western thinking and theorizing about communication phenomena beyond the Western world" (p. 1). However, because of the vast cultural and social differences between Western and Asian nations, media scholars have struggled with applying theories and research methodologies that have been developed mostly in North America and Europe. In addition, political systems in Asia are extremely diverse and often based on very different political philosophies, which make it difficult to draw any general conclusions about the relationship between media and politics in this rapidly changing region of the world.

The Need for More Asian Communication Research

Despite the dramatic political and social changes that have swept many Asian nations in the past decade, the number of studies that focus on political communication in Asia remains relatively small, especially in countries where communication research is just beginning to emerge as a distinct academic field (for example, in Indonesia or Malaysia). Even in countries that have a large number of political communication researchers, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, only a small percentage of the available research has been translated into English and thus can be accessed by Western audiences. The Japanese media scholar Ito Youichi (2000) notes that "[a] major reason for this is that social scientific research outside the West is so far behind the West that researchers in those areas are still busy learning Western theories and methods and introducing them to their countrymen and teaching them to their students" (p. 94).

The paucity of Asian communication research has been documented in a content analysis by Bryant and Yang (2004), who collected and examined all studies related to Asian communication issues that were published in nine major communication journals between 1998 and 2002. In the five years under investigation, the authors found only 65 communication studies that actually dealt with Asian issues, which represents a mere 5% of all journal articles published during that time period. The countries that received the most emphasis in the examined articles were China (23%), Japan (20%), and India (12%), followed by Hong Kong (9%), Taiwan (9%), and Korea (6%).

The limited representation of Asian communication studies in the main academic journals is amplified by the fact that about 40% of these studies are not based on any social scientific theory. Among the studies that actually utilize some form of social scientific theory, Bryant and Yang (2004) note "a heavy reliance on normative communication theory and on extant social-scientific communication theories…but little emphasis on sophisticated theory construction, which is the heart and soul of the creation and advancement of knowledge in any discipline" (p. 146). Thus, most of the examined studies simply retest established media

theories without much innovation. The authors also found that more than two-thirds of the analyzed studies are based on quantitative methods (72%), mostly surveys (51%), content analyses (36%), and, to a lesser extent, experiments (13%). While this bias toward quantitative methods also can be found in Western media studies, it is interesting to note that almost 40% of the analyzed studies rely on cross-cultural or transnational comparisons. Since comparative media studies usually yield more interesting findings than single-nation analyses, this finding is encouraging—even though more than half of the studies are based on comparisons between the United States and a single Asian country.

Bryant and Yang (2004) conclude their analysis with the rather scathing observation that "using traditional criteria for theory construction (e.g., advancing a new proposition, interjecting a new explanatory variable), no true theory construction, modification, or expansion took place in any of the 65 articles dealing with Asian communication issues" (p. 142). According to the authors, this lack of theoretical development in the analyzed studies can be partly explained by the dominant use of survey research and content analyses—methods that often encourage descriptive rather than theoretical analyses.

The Need For Better Media Theory

The research summaries presented in this book clearly show that political communication is still an underdeveloped and incoherent area of research in most Asian nations. Many of the studies discussed here are descriptive and do not attempt to incorporate theoretical approaches developed in either the West or the East. Stevenson (2004) notes that "[u]seful studies of non-Western societies are typically written as descriptive case studies but rarely framed as data appropriate for tests of global theories" (p. 371). Media studies from India, for example, offer interesting glimpses of the relationship between media, culture, and politics—and how these three factors might interact in underdeveloped nations. However, none of these studies have been developed far enough to also provide new theoretical frameworks or reliable empirical data that might support even tentative conclusions.

Another trend that has held back theoretical progress in political communication studies from Asia has been the persistent research focus on government control of the mass media. While this is a pressing issue in many Asian nations the overwhelming attentiveness to press freedom in Asian communication research has led to a neglect of research on more theoretical issues, especially empirical analyses of media effects and public opinion formation. Thus, while many Asian media studies provide fascinating insights into the political function of the mass media in narrow national contexts, the majority of these studies do not advance theoretical thinking about political communication in a non-Western environment. What is needed are new ideas and perspectives and a willingness among Asian media scholars to investigate theoretical rather than descriptive issues. This, in turn, should increase interest and attention among Western audiences.

It would be unfair, however, to blame only academic scholars for a descriptive and nontheoretical bias in Asian political communication research. Institutional differences between the political systems in East and West, a lack of democratic election politics in some Asian countries, an often limited freedom to conduct political studies, and a general shortage of research funding have made it difficult for researchers to conduct political communication research in Asia. The combined effects of these political and social factors have stunted the growth of political communication as an academic field in Asia.

While we initially hoped to find unique research contributions among the political communication studies that have been published in the nine Asian nations under investigation here, it has become clear that most studies are descriptive and atheoretical. Moreover, even the few studies that are based on theoretical ideas or concepts often lack originality and simply replicate Western media theories in an Asian context. A quick look at the reference section in each chapter of this book reveals that, similar to their colleagues in the West, most Asian communication scholars have been drawn to painfully popular media theories such as agenda-setting, framing, or the third-person effect. All too often, studies of Asian communication issues present replications of well-established research findings without considering how media theories that have been developed in Western societies might function in an Asian context. The Korean media scholars Park, Kim, and Sohn (2000) argue that the "mistake seems to be in applying Western perspectives to Korean cases with wholly un-Western conditions" (p. 121). Similar to other critics of Asian media research, the authors argue that Korean communication researchers have accepted Western media theories without reflecting on how these theories might apply to Korean culture and society.

Kluver (2004) claims that this lack of Asian experiences or frameworks has resulted in a situation where "most of the theory-building that happens within the field of political communication is derivative from the Western experience, which presumes that the Western model of politics and communication is or should be normative for the rest of the world" (p. 118). Similarly, the Chinese media scholar Xu Xiaoge (2000) argues that "Western communication theories have failed to fully describe, explain or predict the communication phenomenon in Asia." While these might be overly pessimistic views of the current trends in Asian communication research, it would be tragic if media scholars would miss the opportunity to advance the current state of media theory with unique social and cultural insights. What is clearly missing in most of the current studies on Asian communication issues are attempts at "indigenizing" established media theories through an adaptation to local culture, society, or politics (Kang, 2004; Park et al., 2000).

There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, such as Ito's (2002) "kuuki" or climate of opinion model, which tries to adapt the spiral of silence theory to Japanese society. Also, the inclusion of cultural concepts such as "individualism/collectivism" or "face" in studies of public opinion formation is likely to open up a variety of new research venues that could invigorate the field of political

communication in Asia. However, given the large cultural, social, and political differences between Western and Asian nations, the current number of political communication studies that truly incorporate new ideas of how these media theories might function (if at all) in non-Western societies, is small at best (Ha & Pratt, 2000).

Is There a Need For an Asian Media Theory?

Since the late 1980s, real and perceived differences in culture have caused many Asian researchers to question the applicability of Western mass communication theories in Asia (e.g., Dissanayake, 1988, 1989). Critiques of Western communication theories, such as the one by the renowned Chinese communication scholar Godwin Chu (1988), note that the "Western perspective of communication research and theory, by and large, ignores the social structure and pays relatively scant attention to the societal functions of communication. In the Western perspective of communication theory, culture is rarely explicitly taken into consideration in the research conceptualization, because culture is usually not regarded as a variable" (pp. 205–206). Similarly, Menon (cited by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center [AMIC], 1994) has argued that it is "obvious that indigenous philosophies have a greater bearing on press systems in [South Asia] than any scale of values based on Western communication theories, and there is a real need to re-examine Western theories and practices in the light of Asian cultures and traditions" (pp. xi–xii). However, Menon (1994) also believes that "the search for an Asian perspective does not imply rejection of the Western perspective. It should take whatever is useful and put this in the context of that society's social structure, cultural values and religious beliefs" (p. xii).

This more moderate view of an "Asian perspective," which does not reject but adapts Western media theories, has become the dominant viewpoint among media scholars during the past two decades. For example, Kang Myung-Koo (2004), one of the leading Korean media scholars, argues that Western theories and concepts can be used in Asian communication research because good theories are valuable regardless of their origin. In Kang's view, it might not be necessary to develop specific Korean media theories, but researchers need to construct original research questions that take into account the local context. Thus, media researchers should not just import or fit their arguments into Western theories, but instead are asked to redefine their research questions and borrowed concepts within a local context (Jouhki, 2008). Similarly, Bryant and Yang (2004) argue against a wholesale adoption of Western media theories without modification and instead call for a routine that would challenge the adoption of communication theories "derived from Western mindsets without reconciliation of any parts of the theory or model that are not concordant with Eastern ways of knowing, thinking, symbol making, and action" (pp. 146–147).

Other Asian scholars have begun to question the usefulness of a possible "Asian" communication theory and begun to reject the call for a unique Asian

perspective that would "shake off" Western influences. Wang and Shen (2000), for example, argue that Asian researchers should recognize their cultural heritage, but, at the same time, "enrich the existing body of knowledge through testing and formulating theories" (p. 29). Since a majority of Asian communication studies are based on descriptive and repetitive rather than innovative approaches, it is clear that the international visibility of political communication research from Asia will only be enhanced if researchers adopt more theoretical perspectives in their research and "demonstrate the relevance of their communication issues to the international academic community through theorizing" (Chan, 1992, p. 167).

Overall, the ongoing debate about the importance of a unique Asian perspective in the development of media theory has greatly influenced, if not sometimes hindered, political communication research in Asia. While some media scholars might have hesitated to rethink Western media theories for an Asian context because of the seemingly insurmountable political, social, and cultural differences between the West and the East, the discussion of an Asian perspective in media theory certainly has drawn attention to the fact that these differences need to be recognized and should become a research focus. We therefore firmly believe that the differences between cultures and political systems should encourage scholars to test established media theories in different contexts, rather than to abandon them altogether.

The Need for Cultural Concepts in Communication Research

Culture as a unit of analysis has not received much attention in political communication research, despite an increasing number of comparative studies that analyze political communication processes across nations. According to the international communication scholar Robert Stevenson (2004), this lack of attention to a seemingly obvious variable in political communication can be explained by the fact that it is notoriously difficult to define the boundaries of culture. Cultures can be defined by nation, group, language, religion, knowledge, values, beliefs, and many other dimensions that make it difficult to use culture as the basis of explanation for political communication processes. Stevenson also points out that research based on cultural analyses often leads to comparisons that analyze why one cultural factor might be more influential than another. Such comparisons, of course, can easily offend people who belong to these cultures and therefore might cause considerable trouble for the scholars conducting such studies.

While culture might be a "difficult" variable in political communication research, we strongly believe that it cannot be ignored any longer. The increasingly frequent interactions of international and local media systems have created an environment that creates and maintains political media effects across nations and cultures. Media agenda setting, for example, has been tested mostly in local

or national contexts. However, with the availability of global media, audiences around the world have been affected by news and entertainment that originates outside their own cultural environment. The international coverage of the 2008 U.S. presidential election, for example, might have profoundly influenced perceptions of the United States around the world by carrying historic images of the first African-American presidential candidate in U.S. history. Given the international reach of news and entertainment in today's interconnected world, it seems foolish to continue ignoring the potential interactions of media, politics, and culture that might produce new and unique media effects.

Analyses of cross-national media effects that incorporate culture into their research design are certainly desirable but usually also expensive. However, political communication studies that consider the potential influence of culture do not necessarily need to be based on cross-national samples (which usually makes research more expensive and complicated). It is possible, for example, to test the interaction of ethnicity, religion, and political media use within countries that have diverse ethnic and religious populations, such as India or Malaysia. The impact of culture on political communication also can be analyzed in countries that have distinct cultural systems, such as the Confucian ethics found in China, Korea, and Taiwan. To date, very few studies have investigated how audiences in these countries process political messages that might stress cultural values such as "face," "loyalty," or "social harmony." The goal of such studies, however, should not be to test and confirm established media theories in non-Western settings (although this might be desirable overall), but to reconceptualize established media theories with new ideas that are drawn from a distinct cultural setting. In other words, what is needed are studies that question the basic "cultural" assumptions on which most current media theories are based. In addition, studies that incorporate culture as a variable also force the researchers to recognize that they need to step out of their native cultural environment and consider new perspectives and processes that might not otherwise occur to them. Asia offers a fascinating variety of cultures that differ significantly from those found in North America and Europe, which should encourage communication researchers to rethink traditional media theories with new perspectives and concepts. Only by reading and thinking across traditions and cultures can we advance the field of political communication (Craig & Muller, 2007). The challenge, of course, will be to provide valid and coherent explanations of diverging political media effects observed in different cultures.

The Need For More Comparative Research

Our call for more political communication studies that incorporate culture as a key concept also points to the need for more comparative media studies. For much too long, media theories have been tested within narrow national environments, often ignoring the potential impact of social or cultural context. Stevenson (2004) points out that "[c]omparative studies do provide additional data

points, but we do not see them very often. They are expensive and complicated, but without them, a large part of the body of comparative communication research continues to rely on traditional polemic, citing other polemics instead of evidence that challenges the conventional wisdom of critical research or even addresses the core questions" (p. 372).

The consequences have been relatively dull and repetitive political communication studies analyzing minute variations of the same basic ideas, especially so in the United States and Europe. Moreover, many of the existing comparative media studies are essentially based on individual tests of media effects in various nations and do not provide comparative analyses that question and test the cultural applicability of a media theory in different cultural contexts. Thus, what is needed are not more basic tests of the agenda-setting hypothesis or the third-person effect in some other nation or cultural context, but studies that try to identify unique characteristics in a nation (or culture) that might undermine (or support) the media effects that have been observed and documented mostly in Western societies.

One example of how cultural values can change the basic assumptions on which many media theories are based, can be found in the cross-cultural tests of Noelle-Neumann's (1974) spiral of silence theory. The spiral of silence theory, which analyzes the impact of perceptions of opinion distributions in society as a predictor of political outspokenness, has been successfully tested in a number of different countries. What has been largely ignored, however, are social and cultural differences that might affect political outspokenness in each of the tested nations. In Western countries such as the United States, for example, people who speak up are likely to be perceived as competent, friendly, or intelligent. In cultures where personal uniqueness is less desired and verbal challenges are considered impolite, though, outspokenness can be regarded as a negative characteristic. As a consequence, empirical tests of the spiral of silence theory need to consider the basic cultural assumptions that might alter or negate the impact of key concepts in this theory.

In sum, a comparative research approach not only avoids narrow national perspectives, but also allows scholars to incorporate and then test the validity of new theoretical ideas and concepts across nations or cultures. Asia, of course, provides a rich testing ground for reexamining established media theories in a new (or relatively unexplored) political, social, and cultural context.

What Else Could Be Done?

This is an exciting time for media scholars interested in Asia. The relatively unexplored political, social, and cultural diversity in Asia offers an enormous potential for new research opportunities, which will undoubtedly reenergize the somewhat staid field of political communication. The greatest potential for new studies can be found in Asian countries that have been neglected or ignored during the past decades. While the number of political communication studies from Japan,

South Korea, and Taiwan, for example, has been rising slowly during the past 10 years, research output from other Asian countries, such as India, Indonesia, and Malaysia has been insignificant.

Opportunities for new political communication research also can be found in analyses of political elections in Asia. The noticeable lack of studies on the role of the media in Asian elections indicates that media scholars need to pay more attention to media effects on political attitudes and voting behavior in Asian nations. While we find a fairly substantial number of election studies in countries such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, research in other Asian nations such as India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore is limited at best. Given the fact that most of these nations do not have a long tradition of free elections (or none at all), this is hardly surprising. However, even in undemocratic elections the media play an important role in the formation of public opinion either as a tool of the government or as a possible voice of dissent.

We also know very little about the role of the mass media in political elections that are characterized by a mix of traditional and modern election campaign techniques. In Asian nations with high illiteracy rates, for example, the media need to be much more focused on verbal and visual cues than in typical Western-style campaigns. A perfect illustration of such campaigns can be found in Indian elections, where alternative campaign methods such as political films, video-on-wheels, or music have been extremely successful because they reach a large number of voters who have no access to news media, are illiterate, or simply are not interested in politics (Willnat & Aw, 2008).

While there are some interesting studies that focus on the role of the media in Asian elections, most of them are descriptive and focus on institutional-level analyses of government-media relationships. In addition, Asian communication studies often get lost in detailed descriptions of political institutions, actors, and events that might be interesting, but usually have very little theoretical relevance. What is missing from the political communication literature in Asia, though, are theoretically based studies that *empirically* analyze the interaction of media and politics at the individual level. In other words, communication researchers in Asia should rely more often on theoretical models of media effects that are applicable in their nations (or cultures) and then test these models with quantitative methods that allow a rigorous verification of media effects among individual respondents. An obvious choice for such tests would be data collected through public opinion surveys or experiments. While surveys might prove too expensive for many researchers, experiments not only stimulate theory construction but also allow the collections of individual-level data at a fairly low cost. We therefore hope that future political communication studies conducted in Asia will rely more often on experiments as their main research methodology.

Other promising areas of research are the interpersonal processes that mediate between media exposure and democratic participation in Asia. Since the reach of the news media is limited in many Asian nations, interpersonal discussions assume an even greater importance than in more developed media environments

and could therefore greatly influence how people understand political issues. Unfortunately, only a few studies so far have recognized the importance of interpersonal communication in Asian politics, especially in processes where it combines with traditional media exposure to political news.

More attention should be paid also to the impact of new information technologies on political events and developments in Asia. The growing use of cell phones and text messaging throughout Asia, for example, might support the dissemination of political information in nations that do not have a well-established or politically free media system. The claim that text messages transmitted via cell phones were instrumental in the success of political protests in the Philippines and in Indonesia indicates that new communication technologies can play an important political role in Asia. Another example is Japan's highly developed cell phone culture, which offers fascinating opportunities to study the impact of this "new" technology even before it reaches Western nations.

Noteworthy is also the fact that the political function of the Internet in the ongoing democratization process of many Asian countries remains largely unexplored. Political parties throughout Asia have recognized the potential reach of the Internet and have created Web sites that allow voters to directly access election-related information. Political online forums or blogs also have become important information sources in Asian countries that do not have a free press. The large number of bloggers in China, for example, which is estimated to have reached almost 50 million in 2007 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2008), presents a formidable political force that has yet to be investigated. The political impact of the Internet might be even more visible in countries with government-controlled mass media systems but higher Internet penetration rates than China. Access to political blogs in nations such as Singapore and Malaysia might therefore have profound effects on the free flow of political communication during elections and political crises.

Finally, there is a need for Asian media scholars to write for an international audience. As this book has shown, a significant number of political communication studies have been published in local academic journals that are generally not available outside the authors' home countries. Thus, while many Asian authors might lack the language skills to publish in English, there is a clear need to bring local research to the attention of the international research community. Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese scholars, for example, could make more efforts to publish in international journals or through collections of translated studies.

It should be noted that there are currently four English-language journals available internationally that are devoted specifically to Asian communication research. They include the *Asian Journal of Communication*, affiliated with the Asian Media Information Center in Singapore, the *Asian Communication Research*, the official journal of the Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies, the *Keiō Communication Review*, published by Keiō University in Japan, and the new *Chinese Journal of Communication*, published by the Chinese Uni-

versity of Hong Kong. While still not available in all university libraries, these journals have provided a platform for a wide variety of communication research from Asia that cannot be found in Western media journals.

Overall, the future of Asian political communication research is bright and full of opportunities for researchers ready to reexamine established media theories in different political, social and cultural contexts. Asian communication research can contribute to a more complete and comprehensive understanding of political communication by suggesting possible global implications of Asian parameters and exemplars (Miike, 2007). The hope is that an increased awareness of political communication studies from Asia will help to generate new ideas and a better understanding of how profoundly the media affect our lives around the world.

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