

rather spurred debate over the role of the state in society and has legitimated a renewed acceptance of deficit spending and the need for financial reform.

CONCLUSIONS

Scholarly debates over the sources of political-scale change broadly concern the importance of material or social forces. From materialist perspectives, while agents might adapt with greater or lesser degrees of skill to exogenous shifts, they cannot fundamentally evade the exogenous constraints of the balance of military or economic power. In contrast, constructivist perspectives highlight the influence of the shared ideas that shape interpretations of material incentives. Perhaps more important, these frameworks have important implications for the scope of agency, progress, and reform. Materialist approaches arguably obscure the full scope of agency, limiting it to mere adaptation. These approaches suggest that agents can only respond to material shifts with differing degrees of skill, and that efforts at transforming international or domestic systems in fundamental ways are likely to be frustrated as proponents are selected out of the system. In contrast, constructivists highlight the role of agents in giving meaning to material changes, in ways that can reshape shared understandings, state and societal interests, and institutional possibilities. In this sense, the materialist-constructivist debate is rooted in enduring controversies over not simply the nature of structural constraints, but broader questions of agency, progress, and change.

See also *International Political Economy; Keynesianism; Punctuated Equilibrium.*

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Political Communication

The term political communication is used to refer both to a set of practices and a well-developed interdisciplinary field of research. Although closely tied to political science, the theory and practice of political communication is truly interdisciplinary, drawing from varied traditions in political sociology, political psychology, public opinion research, political marketing and advertising, campaign strategies and management, rhetorical studies, and media studies.

The boundaries of the field vary in breadth, depending on the empirical and theoretical definitions used. Much of the research on political communication focuses on political reporting and on the political institutions and media institutions that shape messages about political actors. Indicators of the large footprint of political communication studies include divisions dedicated to the subject in major academic associations in political science and communication, and the influential interdisciplinary journal *Political Communication*. Widely used texts in the contemporary study of political communication include those by W. Lance Bennett and Robert Entman (2004), Doris Graber (2007), Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004), Brian McNair (2007), and Pippa Norris (2000). As a profession, the field of political communication employs many highly skilled media strategists, public opinion pollsters, and campaign managers and activists who are experts in the communicative practices of politics.

The role and function of the nation-state is central to the vast body of political communication research, particularly through emphasis on the strategies and practices of those who govern and those who seek public office, along with research about effects on the political judgment of citizens, as measured by such outcomes as opinion formation and voting behavior. A major area of research literature on political communication focuses on the relationship between mediated political messages and voter preferences. A classic early work in this tradition was Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet's groundbreaking study in 1944, *The People's Choice*, which revealed the limited effects of newspapers and radio in influencing voter behavior. An unanticipated but often-cited finding of the study revealed that many people make their voting decisions on the basis of the personal influence of opinion leaders and not as a direct result of their media consumption.

Not surprisingly, scholars have maintained a steady interest in the effects of media on voter decisions ever since, developing increasingly elaborate methods for gathering and analyzing data,

testing more complex models, and arriving at more sophisticated conclusions. An important subfield of political communication research has focused on the agenda-setting function of the media by demonstrating correlations between the political priorities of the media and those of citizens. The field of public opinion research focuses largely on how political influence is exercised through the uses of the means of communication and how such influence manifests in forming political will.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although the term *political communication* is used primarily in reference to contemporary political practice and related research in advanced societies, the range of practices and scholarly awareness of their importance has a much longer history. The Greek historian, Thucydides, highlighted the masterful skills of oration used by Pericles (495–429 BCE), the powerful Athenian statesman and general. Aristotle's *The Politics* and *The Rhetoric* discuss strategies, techniques, and illustrations of effective political communication. The Roman statesman Cicero (106–43 BCE) is considered to have been one of history's greatest and most influential orators. The Roman rhetorician, Quintilian (35–100 CE), wrote twelve volumes on the subject of rhetoric, *Institutio Oratoria*. In Book 12, Quintilian fondly quotes Cato, who describes a good orator as "a good man, skilled in speaking." In this context, a "good man" is a citizen who engages in ethical speech. Quintilian notes that eloquence can be pernicious if the tools of rhetoric are forged "not for a soldier, but for a robber." The Western tradition of political oratory remains vibrant and continues to be a subject of scholarly attention, with canonical contemporary texts now including the speeches from John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama.

Alongside the deep tradition of political oratory is the history of the power of political publishing. Canadian historian and political economist Harold A. Innis demonstrates how the means of communication, particularly various forms of writing and printing, have been integral to the rise and fall of empires. Other historians, most notably Lucien Febvre (1976) and Elizabeth Eisenstein (1986), have examined closely how the printing press and the book became powerful tools in the standardization of vernacular languages in Europe and how the increased availability of printed texts correlated with the spread of literacy, marking a broad shift of political power from the clergy and nobility to the bourgeoisie.

Eisenstein emphasizes the essential role that was played by the printing press in the spread of Enlightenment thought, and how printed texts became means by which the Protestant Reformation challenged the power of the Catholic Church, particularly as it was exercised through a monopoly over the dissemination and interpretation of religious texts. According to Eisenstein (1968), Martin Luther referred to the printing press as "God's highest act of grace." Febvre's account of the history of the book demonstrates how, once the European market for texts published in Latin was relatively saturated, "the geography of the book" was a matter of publishers finding the broadest possible markets for texts published in a particular

vernacular language. Benedict Anderson (1991) takes Febvre's account further by arguing that the rise of a sense of national identity and nationalism in early modern Europe was shaped, in part, by the rise of print capitalism.

Political communication was fundamental to the European Enlightenment. Immanuel Kant's 1784 essay, "What is Enlightenment?" emphasized the importance of the public use of reason by which citizens put ideas to the test of public scrutiny and debate. In multiple accounts of the public sphere of the Enlightenment, the printed word functioned to sustain what Jürgen Habermas called "the literary public sphere." As well, the salons, table societies, and coffee houses of eighteenth-century Europe were themselves means, or channels, through which political thought was conveyed and debated. With the rise of industrial capitalism, the technologies of communication also became industrialized. The early nineteenth-century invention of the steam-driven rotary press made it possible to mass-produce newspapers at an unprecedented scale and speed, and at lower cost. These developments occurred in Europe as well as North America and, with the rise of commercial advertising, newspaper ownership became big business. The fact that the class interests of the owners of the major means of communication were those of the rest of society's elite lends support to Karl Marx's often-quoted statement that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force" (Marx, 172).

The role of the press in industrial modernization, and the urbanization that accompanied it, was a matter of some interest to classical social theorists besides Marx. In *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Ferdinand Tönnies characterizes the community life of premodern Europe as rooted in locality. However, while he compares the rural agrarian community with urban industrial society, he also sees *gemeinschaft*, or community, as actually and potentially translocal. Tönnies was aware in his own time that communications media were used to bind space beyond the local community, to maintain communities of interest, and to pose a challenge to the autonomy and sovereignty of nation states. In 1887, Tönnies asserted that the means of communication could, and eventually would, contribute to a variety of forms of transnational political identification, referring to nations as "but a temporary limitation of the boundaryless *Gesellschaft*" (221). In his comments on the press, he writes that the press "can be conceived as its ultimate aim to abolish the multiplicity of states and substitute for it a single world republic coextensive with the world market, which would be ruled by thinkers, scholars, and writers and could dispense with means of coercion other than those of a psychological nature" (221). This is not far removed from the cosmopolitan vision articulated in Kant's "Perpetual Peace" (1795), or that of his contemporary heirs.

Similar to Tönnies's reflections about a German and a global *gesellschaft*, John Dewey emphasized the distinction between the categories of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, or society, in the United States, a country described by Tönnies as "the most modern and *Gesellschaft*-like state" (221). But unlike Tönnies,

Dewey sounds more of an alarm about such a condition. In *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), Dewey worries over whether the accelerating mobility of the “great society” of the United States, a paragon of modernity, threatened to destroy the stable and democratic public life of local communities. As the antidote, Dewey envisions the “great community,” which would rely on the press to sustain it: “Communication alone can create a great community” (142). In Dewey’s view, the conditions of modernity necessitated a material and conceptual shift in the scale of political community: “We have inherited, in short, local town-meeting practices and ideas. But we live and act and have our being in a continental national state” (113).

In addition, Dewey saw the press as the means to bind a national community. Opposing the view of Walter Lippmann in 1922—who dismissed what he saw as a misguided romantic conception of an “omnicompetent citizen” who would be capable of knowledgeable and effective political engagement in a complex modern society—Dewey believed that the civic competence of the average citizen is worthy of cultivation and trust rather than suspicion and underestimation. In Dewey’s argument, the right and the ability to participate as listener and speaker in public debate is essential to competent citizenship, and he believed it could be mobilized on a national scale. This famed Lippmann-Dewey debate remains at the core of normative judgment about the possibilities and limitations of democratic political communication. Unfortunately, Dewey’s idealism did not anticipate the destructive, racist *volks-gemeinschaft* that emerged and prevailed in Nazi Germany, which was mobilized by a powerful media propaganda machine that generated a crude but effective nationalist populism. Lippmann’s pessimistic view goes further to explain it.

Although the research literature on political communication has tended to focus on rational ideals of citizenship and the public sphere, political art and entertainment have been vital means of creating public knowledge and stimulating political passion and engagement. The comic plays of Aristophanes (446–386 BCE) were believed to have had significant consequences for the lives of those who were ridiculed in them. The eighteenth-century French philosopher and satirist Voltaire had a similar effect in his country, so much so that he was forced into exile in England. Similarly, Jonathan Swift used his wit to condemn many policies of the British government. Today, television is a principle medium through which the foibles and judgment of politicians become fodder for public consumption and ridicule. Fake news shows that satirize actual news programs, and late-night talk show hosts supply an endless stream of often well-researched commentary and exposé about the weaknesses and failures of political leaders.

PROPAGANDA

There is a significant body of literature about the uses of advanced means of communication as tools of propaganda, particularly as it pertains to politics and war. The term *propaganda* tends to be associated pejoratively with manipulation and deception. For example, Walter Benjamin argues that when the industrialized means of communication are used for

the aestheticization of politics and the depoliticization of the class structure, it is an expression of fascism: “The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life” (141). One of the great legends of political propaganda is based on reports of an exchange during the Spanish-American War (1898) between American newspaper magnate, William Randolph Hearst, and illustrator and correspondent, Frederick Remington. Remington was sent to Cuba to report on supposed great battles between Spanish rulers and Cuban locals, but he reported to Hearst that he had found no evidence of war and wished to return home, to which Hearst replied, “Please remain. You furnish the pictures and I’ll furnish the war.” Whether or not it is accurate, this account is used often in education to illustrate the use of mass media as tools of political propaganda.

Propaganda analysis has tended to point to harmful effects, particularly in the form of populist appeals to bigotry and hatred, and government manipulation as a means to marshal public support for military aggression. Controversies of this nature implicate media institutions for their collusion with government agendas and their failure to provide accurate accounts of war opposition. By contrast, Jacques Ellul, in 1965, acknowledged the great potential for harm posed by propaganda, but he does not infer that this is a necessary outcome. Rather, propaganda is a means by which political beliefs and messages are made palatable and popular in a technological society; this is essential for forming political will, but it does not necessarily result in harmful effects. For Ellul, the technical mastery that characterizes propaganda in modern society is a cause for ambivalence, because propaganda is not only an instrument of public manipulation and deception, but as he defines it, propaganda is a necessary means by which institutions are able to match the scale of major societal problems. In either case, propaganda is properly understood as a modern manifestation of instrumental reason.

The creator of propaganda’s biggest challenge is not to decide whether a message is correct or good; rather, the challenge is how to make the message effective. This conception of political communication is one in which there is a clear hierarchy and distinction between media producers and media consumers, the latter of whom are viewed as objects of political control by competing political actors. In a harsh 1979 critique of the field of public opinion research, Pierre Bourdieu argues that there is no such thing as public opinion. Rather, there is only mobilized opinion, often among those who lack sufficient knowledge, let alone previously formed opinions, about an issue. For Bourdieu, the valorization of polling data in turn becomes itself a means by which other forms of group formation and opinion formation, such as strikes and political protests or demonstrations, are made to seem less valid as indicators of public opinion, political consensus, and political will.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Contrasted with this view of a hierarchical relationship between media producers and media audiences is a belief

in the value of breaking down the distinction to enhance democratic deliberation and political participation through innovative uses of communication. Recalling the Lippmann-Dewey debate, rather than assume that public knowledge about social issues and participation in the process of public deliberation is beyond the cognitive capacities of the average citizen, a combination of political will and innovative uses of "old" and "new" media has contributed to enthusiasm about the potential for enhancing citizen engagement. For example, the civic journalism movement of the late 1990s was an attempt to make newspapers into more responsive facilitators of public deliberation about issues of local importance, although this movement has lost much of its luster and momentum in light of the commercial imperatives that motivate the business decisions of newspaper publishers.

More expansive conceptions of political communication take into account a wide range of discursive practices, including media strategies aimed at contesting the power of nation-states, intergovernmental organizations, and corporations. Under authoritarian governments in central and Eastern Europe before 1989, there was an active underground system of publishing and distributing political literature. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 relied heavily on mobilization through the use of such small media as mimeograph machines and audiocassettes. In the United States and many other parts of the world, radical media have been shown to be vital means for mobilizing and sustaining many alternative and oppositional movements.

Citizens now use the Internet to reach large audiences as a means to promote a wide range of political causes. In recent years, the growth in political importance of the Internet has led to experimentation with electronic democracy, and recently has attracted attention to the uses of social media like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube to involve citizens more directly in the selection, framing, mass dissemination, and deliberation about political news. In addition, political leaders and their supporters are finding ways to make use of these same media to reach target audiences with well-defined messages.

See also *Advertising, Political; Communication, Two-step Flow of; Debates, Political; Framing and Public Opinion; Jeremiad; Music, Political; Political Discourse; Political Science Journals; Propaganda; Protest Music; Spin.*

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