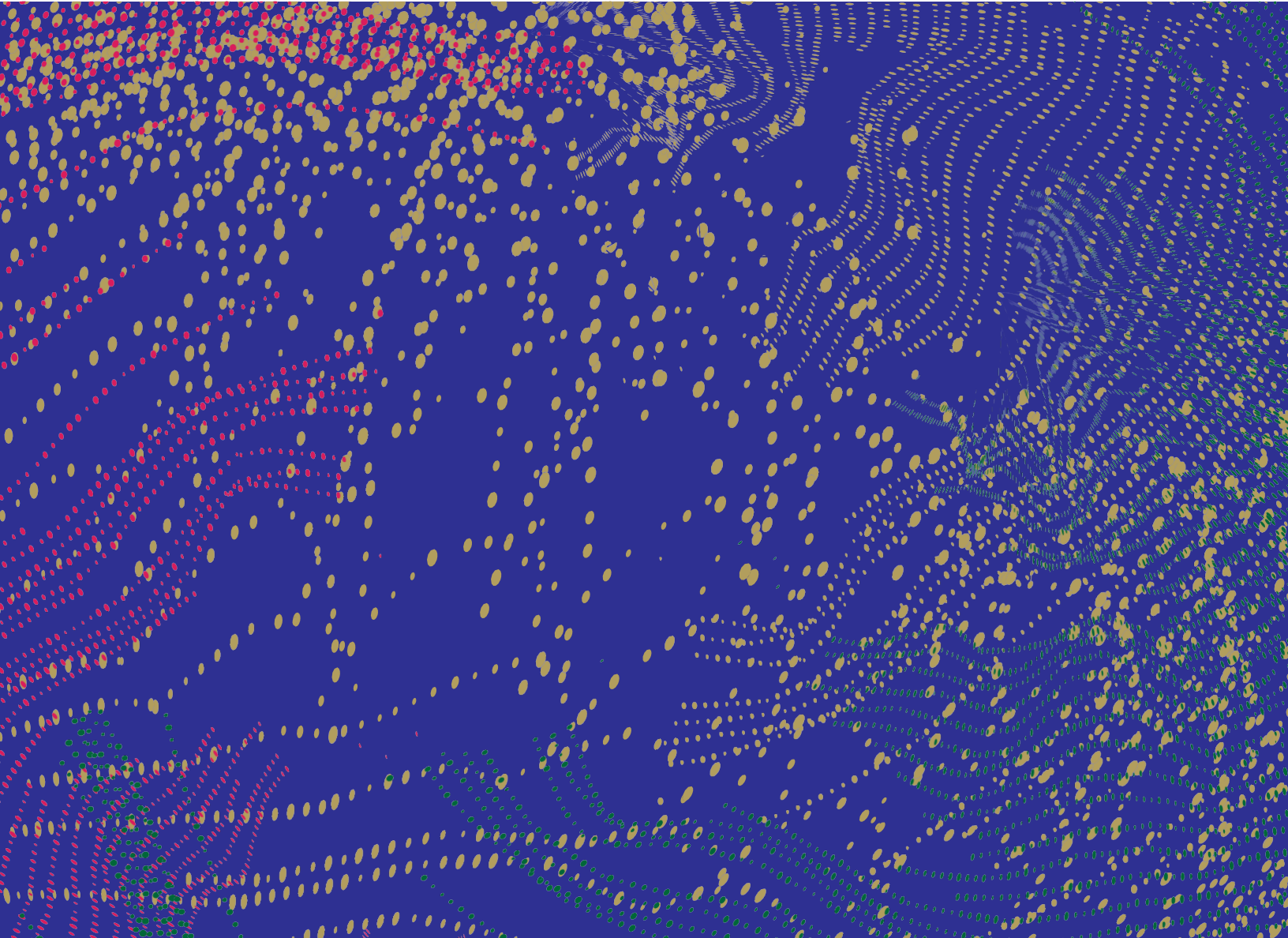The World Humanities Report

Journalism and Communication Studies in China

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Journalism and Communication Studies in China

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Since the era of reform and opening up, Chinese journalism and communication studies have welcomed new opportunities for development. The influence of mainstream communication studies from the United States and the rise of the market economy changed, to some extent, traditional "party newspaper" journalism and promoted the establishment of a new academic discourse and disciplinary system. The rise of the internet and social media in mainland China has also profoundly changed the practice of journalism and catalyzed reforms in communication theory. Mainstream communication theory, however, is value-free, with a scientific veneer wrapped around a Cold War core. Rooted in the new media environment, Chinese journalism and communication scholars have begun to consciously critique and reflect on mainstream communication theory. Three new paths have emerged in academic research: the return of Marxism, reconceptualization of "the medium/media," and journalism "with Chinese characteristics." In recent years, many scholars have rebuffed the ideology of mainstream communication studies and have, in turn, sought both to establish a more pragmatic research orientation and to expand research topics in journalism and communication studies.

This essay reviews and summarizes the development of the disciplines of journalism and communication studies over the past three decades.

The 1990s: The Establishment of Journalism and Communication Studies

In the early 1980s, Chinese journalism scholars began to systematically translate and introduce mainstream communication studies scholarship from the United States. In April and May 1982, American communication scholar Wilbur

Schramm visited China and gave a series of lectures in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, and Xiamen on Western communication studies. In November 1982, the Institute of Journalism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences initiated the first Symposium on Western Communication Studies, which proposed translating major works on communication, publishing research articles, and offering elective courses in communication studies. Subsequently, major works of American scholarship on communications began to be systematically introduced into China: Wilbur Schramm and William E. Porter's *Men, Women, Messages, and Media: Understanding Human Communication*, Schramm's *Mass Communications*, Werner Severin and James Tankard's *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media*, Denis McQuail and Sven Windahl's *Communication Models for the Study of Mass Communications*, among others.[1] A group of scholars from the Institute of Journalism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Fudan University, Renmin University of China, Jinan University, and elsewhere also began to introduce the relevant theories and research of Western communication studies.

During this period, there was a debate on the relationship between news and propaganda, with news no longer being seen as propaganda but as "information." Schramm's model of communication was regarded as an objective and universal science that suited the de-ideologizing of journalism and the construction of a theoretical system with information as its core. It also paved the way for the marketization of journalism.

With the development of the market economy in China in the 1990s, journalism and the study of communication became more closely linked, as "information" replaced "news." Communication studies was seen as a remedy for party journalism's emphasis on communicators and content rather than the entire process of actual news dissemination. This partiality toward communication studies arose from the decline of party newspaper journalism in the 1990s, for which "red-tapeism" and bureaucracy in journalistic practice were to blame.

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[1] Wilbur Schramm and William Porter, *Chuanboxue gailun* [Introduction to communication], trans. Chen Liang et al. (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1984); Wilbur Schramm, *Chuanxue gailun: Chuanmei—xinxi yu ren* [Introduction to communication: Media—information and humans], trans. Yu Yelai (Beijing: Zhongguo zhanwang chubanshe, 1985); Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard Jr., *Chuanboxue de qiyuan, yanjiu yu yingyong* [The origins, methods, and uses of communication studies], trans. Chen Yunzhao (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1985); Denis McQuail and Sven Windahl, *Dazhong chuanbo moshi lun* [Theory of mass communication models], trans. Zhu Jianhua (Shanghai: Shanghai yiwen chubanshe, 1987).

Along with the rise of the market-driven metropolitan newspapers, journalistic professionalism replaced the view of the press as the Communist Party mouthpiece as the pedagogical focus in journalism schools, as the ideology party politics weakened and party newspapers declined. In 1996 journalism was promoted from a second-level discipline to a first-level discipline of journalism and communications, which meant that the status of communication science was officially confirmed, marking a new era in the development of journalism and communication studies in China. As the status of party newspaper journalism declined, the phrase "journalism has no learning" became common in the industry, while communication provided the basis for the establishment of the discipline. A number of Chinese scholars published books or textbooks on communication, such as Zhang Yonghua's *Dazhong chuanboxue* [Mass communication studies] (1992), Li Bin's *Chuanboxue yinglun* [Introduction to communication studies] (1993), Zhang Guoliang's *Chuanboxue yuanli* [Principles of communication studies] (1995), and Huang Dan's *Xinwen chuanboxue* [Journalism and communication studies] (1995). Four major professional academic journals—*Journalism and Communication*, *Chinese Journal of Journalism and Communication*, *Journalism Bimonthly*, and *Modern Communication*—published cutting-edge scholarship and gradually established their authoritative status in the field.

Journalistic and Communication Theory and Research Methods

Research in journalist and communication studies have emphasized the classical theories of mainstream communication. In particular, scholars such as Guo Zhenzhi and Yin Xiaorong have systematically explored an important theory of communication—media agenda setting.[2] Guo Qingguang has written an article on another important theory of communication—the spiral of silence.[3] In

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[2] Guo Zhenzhi, "Guanyu dazhong chuanbo de yicheng shezhi gongneng" [On the agenda-setting function of mass communication], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 3 (1997):18–25; Yin Xiaorong, "Yicheng shezhi lilun de chansheng, fazhan he neizai maodun—Meiguo chuanboxue xiaoguo yanjiu de yige zhongyao shiye" [The emergence, development, and inherent contradictions of agenda-setting theory—an important perspective on the study of the effects of communication studies in the United States], *Xiamen daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)*, no. 2 (1999): 108–13.

[3] Guo Qingguang, "Dazhong chuanbo, xinxi huanjing yu shehui kongzhi—cong 'chenmo de luoxuan' jiashuo tanqi" [Mass communication, information environment, and social control: Starting from the "spiral of silence" hypothesis], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu*, no. 3 (1995): 33–38.

addition to the in-depth study of Western theories, scholars have also made many attempts to localize communication studies.[4] This trend of localization later propelled the emergence of Chinese communication studies, a school of thought dedicated to the search for the phenomenon of communication in Chinese history or for justification in the classics, but its understanding of communication itself is limited to Western communication studies, on the one hand, and to the identification of the phenomenon of communication in history, on the other.

The research methods of communication studies make up for the methodological shortcomings of traditional journalism, which is an important reason why communication studies is highly regarded by Chinese scholars. Communication scholars have systematically introduced the research methods of communication science, and Bu Wei's articles demonstrate the broad interest among the academic community.[5]

The Rise of Research on Audience and Communication Effectiveness

Audience is the core concept of mass communication research and an important link between journalism and communication. "Audience" replaced "the masses" of party journalism, and the emphasis on audience research and the exploration of media effects constituted an important scholarly landscape in the 1990s. During this period, journalism and communication scholars began to use social science research methods to analyze audiences and communication effects in a more scientific way.

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[4] Some examples include Wu Yumin, *Wuxing de wangluo—cong chuanboxue jiaodu kan* [The invisible network: China's traditional culture from the perspective of communication studies] (Beijing: Guoji wenhua chuban gongsi, 1988); Xu Lei, "Woguo minjian suyu zhong de chuanboxue siwei chutan" [A preliminary exploration of communication logic in Chinese folk sayings], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 2 (1994): 16–18; Wang Zhenye, "Zhongguo gudian wenlun zhong de chuanbo sixiang" [Communications in classical Chinese literature], *Xiandai chuanbo: Zhongguo chuanmei daxue xuebao*, no. 3 (1992): 52–61.

[5] Bu Wei, "Chuanboxue sibian yanjiulun" [Research theory of communication studies], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 5 (1996): 31–35; Bu Wei, "Lun chuanboxue dingxing yanjiu fangfa" [On qualitative research methods in communication studies], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 6 (1996): 46–51; Bu Wei, "Lun shehui diaocha fangfa de luoji ji jiazhi" [On the logic and value of social survey methods], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 1 (1997): 58–63; Bu Wei, "Kongzhi shiyan—yizhong changyong de chuanboxue yanjiu fangfa" [Controlled experimentation—a common methodology of communication research], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 2 (1997): 55–59; Bu Wei, "Fangfalun de xuanze: Dingxing haishi dingliang" [The choice of methodology: Qualitative or quantitative], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 5 (1997): 49–54.

First, some organizations conducted large-scale audience surveys. In 1990 eight news organizations and public opinion research institutes in Beijing conducted a multilevel, multi-angled, and large-scale survey on the social effects of the publicity and coverage of the 11th Asian Games. The survey report was compiled and published as *Zhongguo shehui xinli de guiji* [The trajectory of Chinese social psychology],[6] showing the social mentality of Chinese audiences before and after the Games. In terms of data measurement, the questionnaire was first analyzed for reliability and validity. In terms of the method of data analysis, the survey employed the high-level multivariate correlation analysis method of social statistics, as well as the most ideal survey analysis methods in communication research.[7] In 1991 the Institute of Journalism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences conducted a large-scale survey of urban and rural radio and television audiences in Zhejiang Province to understand audiences' exposure to media in the region.[8]

Second, a number of academic papers used quantitative research methods to measure communication effects. The quantitative research method differed from traditional analytical research and was considered more scientific and accurate by scholars and thus more esteemed.[9]

Some Explorations beyond the Mainstream Communication Studies

In addition to the Schramm school as the core of communication research, many scholars have conducted preliminary explorations of the critical school, the Chicago school, and McLuhan's media theory. In 1994 and 1995 Li Bin published two articles that reflected on communication research in the United

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[6] Zhao Shuifu, ed., *Zhongguo shehui xinli de guiji—yayun xuanchuan xiaoguo diaocha baogaoji* [The trajectory of Chinese social psychology—a collection of reports on the effect of Asian Games publicity] (Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan chubanshe, 1991).

[7] Liao Shengqing, "Woguo 20nian lai chuanboxue yanjiu de huigu" [A retrospective of communication research in China in the past 20 years], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 4 (1998): 24–30.

[8] Dahong, "Zhejiangsheng zaici jinxing shouzhong diaocha" [Zhejiang province conducts audience survey again], *Xinwen yanjiu ziliao*, no. 2 (1991): 54.

[9] Two examples of such quantitative research include Song Xiaowei and Zhu Xiangxia, "Dianshi yu shaonian ertong—Beijing shiqu san zhi liunianji xiaoxuesheng shoushi qingkuang diaocha" [Television and children and adolescents—a survey on the viewership of primary school students from grades 3 to 6 in Beijing], *Xinwen yanjiu ziliao*, no. 4 (1990): 94–105; and Chen Chongshan and Jin Wenxiong, "Guangbo dianshi Yayun xuanchua dui shouzhong taidu de yingxiang" [The impact of radio and televised Asian Games publicity on audience attitudes], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu*, no. 4 (1990): 59–93.

States and introduced the theoretical lineage of the Frankfurt School.[10] In the 1995 and 1997 issues of *Journalism and Communication*, Rui Bifeng introduced the ideas of George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley about interpersonal communication, W. I. Thomas's "definition of the situation," and other research findings of the Chicago school.[11] In addition, in 1992 the first edition of Marshall McLuhan's 1964 book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* was translated by He Daokuan and published, and scholars such as Li Bin, Wang Yihong, and Chen Weixing studied Marshall McLuhan's theories. These studies laid the foundation for the expansion of journalism and communication theory in the new century.

The introduction of communication studies broke the long-held research framework of "news activities–news institutions–news reporting" in party journalism and propelled the disciplinary construction and academization of journalism and communication studies. In the mid-1990s, with the establishment of journalism and communication studies as a first-level discipline, many scholars conducted theoretical and applied research based on the theoretical system of Western communication science. In this process, an empirical paradigm of communication studies gradually dominated, while a theoretical and critical paradigm had not yet garnered the attention it deserves.

After 2000: The Burgeoning of Internet and Social Media Research

In the first decade of the new century, the greatest impact on the development of journalism and communication studies has been the introduction of the internet. In 1994 China was connected to the internet. In 2000 three major internet companies (Sohu, Sina, and NetEase) were listed on Nasdaq, and thus began the new wave of media development. The year 2005 saw the birth of

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[10] Li Bin, "Zhengzhi jingji wenhua—yizhong guanyu pipan xuepai zhi lilun atnjiu de bianxi" [Political economic culture—an analysis of the theoretical inquiry of the critical school], *Xiandai chuanbo: Zhongguo chuanmei daxue xuebao*, no. 2 (1994): 18–24; Li Bin, "Chuantong xuepai yu pipan xuepai de bijiao yanjiu" [A comparative study of the traditional school and the critical school], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 2 (1995): 16–19.

[11] Rui Bifeng, "Renlei shehui yu renji chuanbo—shilun Mide he Kuli dui chuanbo yanjiu de gongxian" [Human society and interpersonal communication—on Mead's and Cooley's contribution to communication research], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu*, no. 2 (1995): 60–65; Rui Bifeng, "Renlei lijie yu renji chuanbo—cong 'qingjing dingyi' kan Tuomasi de chuanbo sixiang" [Human understanding and interpersonal communication: Thomas's notion of communication from the "definition of the situation"], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu*, no. 2 (1997): 73–76, 95–96.

Sina Blog (the most popular blog in China) and the rise of "blog fever." In 2009 Renren Network and Sina Weibo inaugurated the era of social media, and in 2014 China entered the universal "era of WeChat," whose users exceeded 1 billion by 2018. That same year the number of users of short videos grew explosively, and the recommendation algorithm became increasingly prevalent in the application of social media platforms.

The rapid changes in online communication injected new momentum but also brought serious challenges to journalism and communication studies. In May 2000 the Center for International Communication Studies at Tsinghua University hosted a seminar "Journalism and Communication in the Internet Era," where it was announced that China had entered the "internet era" and that the number of internet users was "growing at a rate of 20% to 400%" each year.[12] By 2010 the number of internet users in China totaled 457 million, which constituted the 34.3 percent penetration rate.[13] Influenced by the American structural-functionalist view of communication, the prominent feature of the research of this period was the promotion of the "technological empowerment" of the internet and new media.

The internet has forced news communication theory to make significant adjustments and has further strengthened the status of communication studies. During this period, communication research in the internet environment was born.[14] Communication studies found its place in both public opinion research and media marketization and received financial support from the government and the market.

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[12] Chen Hong and Zhou Qing'an, "Hulianwang: Women yu shijie tongbu—'wangluo shidai de xinwen chuanbo' yantaohui zongshu" [The internet: We are in step with the world—a summary of the seminar on "Journalism and communication in the internet era"], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 4 (2000): 27–31.

[13] China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), "2010 nian Zhongguo hulian wangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao" [Statistical report on the development of Chinese internet in 2010], February 28, 2011.

[14] See, for example, Zhang Guoliang, "Wangluo shidai de meijie yu shouzhong" [Media and audience in the internet era], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 1 (2001): 19–22; Wang Zaicheng, "Wangluo chengwei chengshu meiti de tezheng fenxi" [Analysis of the characteristics of the internet as a mature media], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 3 (2003): 53–55; Du Junfei, "Liuyan de liubian: SARS yuqing de chuanboxue fenxi" [The flow of rumors: A communication analysis of SARS public opinion], *Nanjing daxue xuebao (zhexue, renwen kexue, shehui kexue ban)*, no. 5 (2003): 116–24; Wang Xiling, Duan Jingsu, and Li Huimin, "'Chuangxin kuosan' zhong de zuzhi jiegou fenxi: Yi 'jinta moshi' wei ge'an" [Analysis of organizational structure in "innovation diffusion": A case study of the "Jinta Model"], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 4 (2007): 54–57.

The impact of digital technology on media has become a hot research topic. In this regard, Peng Lan has published a series of articles;[15] Yu Guoming has also importantly analyzed the impact of the internet on the media industry.[16] Scholarly endeavors of these two pioneers in the field of China's digital media and digital economy have been seminal in shedding light on the developmental trajectory and future orientation of China's internet industry.

New communication technologies became an important dynamic driving and transforming journalism and journalistic theory. Many scholars are happy to see the application of new technologies and believe that the internet, cell phones, and other emerging media have propelled changes in journalism. Tong Bing argues that it is necessary to constantly pay attention to and promote the technical equipment of news media, improve communication skills, and let modern technology serve the news and information.[17] Yang Baojun believes that through the complementarity of online news and traditional media news, people can more accurately and comprehensively understand changes in the surrounding environment.[18] Li Liangrong, on the other hand, analyzes the new landscape of public opinion in new media and traditional media from a

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[15] Peng Lan, "Zhongguo hulianwan zhanwang—jishu biange yu fazhan dongxiang" [China's internet outlook: Technological changes and developmental trends], in *2004 di'erjie Yazhou chuanmei luntan—xinwenxue yu chuanboxue quanqiuhua de yanjiu, jiaoyu yu shijian lunwenji* [2004 the second Asian media forum—research, education, and practice of globalization of journalism and communication studies] (Beijing: Zhongguo chuanmei daxue Yazhou chuanmei yanjiu zhongxin, 2004); Peng Lan, "WEB 2.0 zai Zhongguo de fazhan jiqi shehui yiyi" [The development and social significance of WEB 2.0 in China], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 10 (2007): 44–48; Peng Lan, "Guanyu shuzi meiti neirong guanli tixi jianli yuanze de sikao" [Thoughts on the principles of establishing content management system for digital media], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 11 (2007): 12–18; Peng Lan, "Cong shequ dao shehui wangluo—yizhong hulianwang yanjiu shiye yu fangfa de tuozhan" [From community to social network—an expansion of the research vision and methodology of the internet], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 5 (2009): 87–92.

[16] Yu Guoming, "Yingxiangli jingji—dui chuanmei chanye benzhi de yizhong quanshi" [the Economy of influence—An interpretation of the essence of the media industry], *Xiandai chuanbo*, no. 1 (2003): 1–3; Yu Guoming, "Zhimian shuzihua: Meijie shichang xinqushi yan-jiu" [Confronting digitalization: Research on new trends in the media market], *Guoji xinwen jie*, no. 6 (2006): 25–29.

[17] Tong Bing, "Lun chuanmei jishu yu neirong xuqiu de hudong" [On the interaction between media technology and content demand], *Xinwen jizhe*, no. 3 (2006): 10–12.

[18] Yang Baojun, "Lun wangluo xinwen zhenshi de tezheng" [On the true characteristics of online news], *Xiandai shitin*, no. 11 (2007): 6–8.

theoretical perspective.[19] These studies generally take a more optimistic approach in understanding the relationship between internet technology and journalism.

The relationship between the internet and culture has received equal attention from scholars. The internet has brought great speed and convenience to cultural transmission, facilitating the exchange of different forms of culture, and online communities have helped to construct collective identities for internet. However, some scholars believe that inherent crises lurk within online cultural communication. Shi Anbin claims that due to the inequality inherent in technology, the existing global communication system, although breaking the boundaries of traditional geopolitics, is, in terms of content, still a unipolar system dominated by the US cultural hegemony. Therefore, online media require ideological construction to create a favorable environment in international public opinion for the survival and development of China.[20]

Online Public Domain Research Boom

Discussion of the 2003 the so-called Sun Zhigang incident has had a profound impact on the development of the internet in China.[21] Building on the "Habermas fever" that has held sway since the 1990s, many believed the internet had the potential to become a "public sphere" and that the online forum offered the possibility of "rational" interaction of participants. Influenced by this discourse and theory, scholars emphasized that a modern state must provide a good media environment, so that the media can have positive interactions with the state, society, and the public to maintain democracy and the rule of law.

The public nature of media, or lack thereof, has become a prominent issue in journalism and communication, and the internet and new media have indeed played an important role in public events, which has led to much support for

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[19] Li Liangrong, "Miandui xinmeiti tiaozhan, dangbao yao gaibian baodao moshi" [Facing the challenge of new media, party journalism should change its reporting format], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 3 (2000): 33–34.

[20] Shi Anbin, "Quanqiu wangluo chuanbo zhong de wenhua he yishi xingtai wenti" [The problem of culture and ideology in global network communication], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu*, no. 3 (2003): 52–60, 95.

[21] Zhang Zhi'an and Chen Feng, "Wo buxie Sun Zhigang, chizao hui youren xie—shendu baodao jingying fangtan zhi liu" [If I don't write about Sun Zhigang, someone else will sooner or later—interviews with elite in-depth reporters], *Qingnian jizhe*, no. 3 (2008): 37–39. Sun Zhigang was a migrant worker who in 2003 died in police custody after being detained for not carrying his ID card. After the media reported the incident, the Chinese government abolished its custody and repatriation system.

Western theories of civil society that emphasize the separation of state and society. Some scholars understand the online public sphere from the perspective of new media empowerment. Zhang Jinhai and Li Xiaoman suggest that a rational media structure should be established that is jointly constructed by state media, public media, and commercial media and that reaches a balance among government, media, and public interests.[22] In this way, they believe, we can avoid the crisis of media publicity. Zhan Jiang has summarized the value of the public sphere thus: the media should clarify and maintain its role as a public instrument, become a public information platform as well as a public forum, and prevent degradation under the erosion of undesirable political and economic forces.[23] He argues that with the development of new technologies highlighting the great power of mass communication, news events are gaining influence on the public through the dissemination of new media. Hu Yong has argued that microblogs are the first public sphere in China to transcend class and geography.[24] In addition, some scholars have discussed the conditions for the constitution of the online public sphere. Pan Zhongdang and Yu Hongmei emphasize the importance of public subjectivity and media practices for media publicness.[25]

Public sphere theory, however, clashed with the notion of public opinion guidance in party journalism theory, and this brought about a division in scholarly research. On the one hand, some scholars insisted on promoting research on the construction of cultural hegemony of mainstream media from the perspective of the close connection between communication and politics; on the other hand, some advocated for the public sphere theory of new media from the perspective of regulating the platishers (online venues that are a cross between platforms and publishers). The intersection, conflict, and convergence of

[22] Zhang Jinhai and Li Xiaoman, "Chuanmei gonggongxing yu gonggongxing chuanmei—jianlun chuanmei jiegou de heli jiangou" [Media publicness and public media—a rational construction of media structure], *Wuhan daxue xuebao (renwen kexue ban)*, no. 6 (2007): 863–67.

[23] Zhan Jiang, "Habeimasi de 'gonggong lingyu' lilun yu chuanmei" [Habermas's theory of the public sphere and the media], *Zhongguo qingnian zhengzhi xueyuan xuebao*, no. 2 (2002): 123–28.

[24] Zhang Ke, "Hu Yong fangtan lu" [Interviews with Hu Yong], *Jiancha fengyun*, no. 17 (2011): 19–20.

[25] Pan Zhongdang and Yu Hongmei, "Hulianwang shiyong dui chuantong meiti de chongji: Cong shiyong yu pingjia qieru" [The impact of internet use on traditional media: From the use and evaluation], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 2 (2010): 4–13.

these two paths have shaped the development of journalism and communica-
tion research in China.

After 2010: Rethinking the Research Path and "Paradigm Shift" of Journalism and Communication Studies

As mentioned earlier, around 1980 Chinese journalism scholars became inter-
ested in Wilbur Schramm and his American communication theory with hopes
for journalistic reform. In 2010 scholars noted the thirty-year anniversary of the
introduction of the Schramm school to China and produced a systematic review
of the development of journalism and communication studies in China along
with a compilation of related historical materials.[26] In addition, in 2012 the
fourth issue of *Journalism and Communication* published a forum titled "Com-
memorating the 30th Anniversary of Schramm's Visit to Mainland China," in
which Yu Yelu, Xu Yaokui, Chen Chongshan, Jiang Fei, and others wrote in
a nostalgic style about Schramm's "guiding role" in Chinese journalism and
communication studies.

At the same time, a wave of reflection is quietly emerging. Different scholars
started to examine the past research from different perspectives and to open up
new paths. First, scholars pointed out that earlier scholarship had removed
mainstream communication studies, which grew out of the "cultural cold war"
in the United States, from its historical context and ideology and that it had
popularized communication as a "scientific" object. Under this framework, they
showed that the relationship among global reality, local Chinese reality, and
Western theory had been left unresolved.[27] They argued further that the rein-
troduction of a Marxist critical social science perspective would be of great sig-
nificance in expanding research topics in journalism and communication
studies. Indeed, in establishing a realist research orientation, critical communi-
cation studies research began to flourish.[28] Second, researchers pointed out how
Schramm's and others' substantive "media view" was gradually losing its

[26] Wang Yihong and Hu Yiqing, eds., *Zhongguo chuanboxue 30 nian* [30 years of Chinese com-
munication studies] (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 2010).

[27] Zhao Yuezhi and Shi Liyue, "Lishi shiye li de ziben zhuyi weiji yu pipan chuanboxue zhi
zhuanji" [The crisis of capitalism in historical perspective and the turnaround of critical com-
munication studies], *Xinwen daxue*, no. 5 (2015): 1–7.

[28] Lu Xinyu, "Xueshu yu zhengzhi: Chongdu Weibo—guanyu shehui kexue fangfalun de biji"
[Scholarship and politics: Rereading Weber—notes on social science methodology], in
Xueshu, chuanmei yu gonggongxing [Scholarship, media, and publicness] (Shanghai: Huadong
shifan daxue chubanshe, 2015), 1–60.

interpretative power in the face of new media practices. In response, some scholars attempted to view communication practices and the world they construct from a metaphorical "pan-media" perspective. They considered how media technology and its dominating effect on people resonate with social structures, and gradually consensus emerged in the academic community around a new understanding of "medium." Finally, journalistic professionalism, which had been based on mainstream empirical communication studies and liberalism, gradually evolved from a journalistic ideal into a way for the media to confirm their hegemony in the process of media marketization,[29] creating all sorts of problems. Some scholars have reflected on this situation and, to respond to the real dilemma of journalism and communication research today, have constructed a system of "journalism with Chinese characteristics" responsive to the history of China's revolution and its journalistic tradition.

The Rise of "Critical Communication" Research

In December 2010 and May 2011 international symposiums were held at Fudan University on "Reconstructing the Theoretical Horizon of Critical Studies—Contemporary Marxist Journalism and Communication Theory" and "Communication and Social Transformation in Marxist Perspective," respectively. Thereafter the Center for Contemporary Marxist Journalism and Communication Studies was established, with Lu Xinyu as its executive director, with plans to publish a series of books on critical communication studies. The center has since moved to East China Normal University, where it continues to conduct annual conferences on critical communication and seminars on Marxist communication in Asia. The book series combines the political economy of communication with cultural studies, reflecting on the achievements and problems of Marxist communication theory in China in historical and contemporary contexts. It emphasizes the enrichment, development, and challenges of Marxist communication theory in the context of China and uses it to analyze the state of the global media, information, and cultural industries and related regulations and policies. In this way, the Chinese path of critical communication studies has officially emerged in the academic circles of Chinese journalism and communication. In 2016 Dan Schiller gave a lecture on "The Rise and Expansion

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[29] Lu Xinyu and Zhao Yuezhi, "Zhongguo de xiandaixing, dazhong chuanmei yu gong-gongxing de chonggou" [Modernity, mass media, and the reconfiguration of publicness in China], in *Xueshu, chuanmei yu gonggongxing*, 104–6.

of Information Capitalism" at Peking University, which was soon published in Chinese.[30] And in 2014 Dallas Smythe's essay "What Comes after the Bicycle?," which he wrote after a visit to China in 1979, was published in Chinese for the first time.[31]

After a decade of development, based on the dialogue with Western political economy of communication, Chinese critical communication studies can be broadly divided into three research directions according to different issues. First, new media and digital labor. According to Lu Xinyu, the "self-digitization" of users constitutes the source of surplus value in the new media era.[32] This is not only a process of manufacturing consent, but also a market environment in which democracy can become the biggest business, and capital needs to continuously purchase democracy in order to survive. It is only from this perspective that the labor theory of value, the source of profit for (new) media, can be located.[33] At the same time, Xia Bingqing compares and reviews the theoretical development of digital labor in the West,[34] and the issue of the digital labor of groups such as online gamers, rideshare drivers, and delivery drivers has also attracted relevant research. Zhao Yuezhi, on the other hand, criticizes the possibility of uniting information industry labor around the world because that approach treats labor conflicts and labor expressions in the field of communication as a universal problem without considering the differences between countries and stages of industrialization. "There is no better expression of Western-

[30] Dan Schiller, *Xinxi ziben zhuyi de xingqi yu kuozhang—wangluo yu Nikesong shidai* [The rise and expansion of information capitalism—network and the age of Nixon] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2018).

[31] Dallas Smyth and Hongzhe Wang, "Zixingche zhihou shi shenme?—jishu de zhengshi yu yishi xingtai shuxing" [What comes after the bicycle?—the political and ideological properties of technology], *Kaifang shidai*, no. 4 (2014): 94–107.

[32] Lu Xinyu, "Goumai 'mingzhu': Xinmeiti shidai de laodong jiazhilun" [Buying "democracy": Labor value theory in the new media era], *Xinwen yu chuanbo pinglun* 71, no. 1 (2018): 42–55.

[33] Lu Xinyu, "Xinmeiti shidai de 'weilai kaogu'—chuanbo zhengzhi jingjixue shijiao xia de Zhongguo chuanmei biange" [The "future archaeology" in the new media era—Chinese media transformations from the perspective of political economy of communication], *Shanghai daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 35, no. 1 (2018): 121–40.

[34] Xia Bingqing, "Shuzi laogong de gainian, xuepai yu zhutixing wenti—xifang shuzi laogong lilun fazhan shuping" [The concept, school of thought, and the problem of subjectivity of digital labor—a review of the development of Western digital labor theory], *Xinwen jizhe*, no. 8 (2020): 87–96.

centrism than such a theoretical premise," he writes.[35] The theme of the annual international conference on critical communication held at East China Normal University in October 2019 was "What Is Labor in the Digital Age—Labor Issues and Media Transformation in the Age of Digital Media?" Seventy scholars from twelve countries and regions participated in the conference.

Second, rural communication and urban-rural relations. Mainstream communication theory, represented by Schramm, has had an urban-centric bias since its inception. Under its framework, the countryside and peasants exist as subordinates and objects of the development of the city. Lu Xinyu argues that the countryside and the city are two sides of the same coin, inseparable and mutually constraining whole of Chinese society. Rural society is the key and secret to understanding China's history and social change since the modern era.[36] Zhao Yuezhi points out that only by breaking through the Western- and urban-centric ideological framework of development communication studies and constructing a vision of urban-rural relations can Chinese communication research take a new path.[37] Under Zhao Yuezhi's impetus, in July 2015 the Heyang Rural Institute was established in Jinyun, Zhejiang Province, and the Heyang Forum and Rural Communication Summer School are held every year.

Third, socialism and communication in the digital age. Zhao Yuezhi proposes a China-based approach in developing a Marxist political economy of communication for the twenty-first century.[38] Lu Xinyu argues that a socialist democratic politics is a prerequisite for viewing the public nature of communication in China and that a socialist public communication system needs to integrate three levels of relationships: social media and mainstream media; communication and rural revitalization strategy; and balancing development between the east and west regions, where communication in ethnic-minority regions is particularly important.[39] Hong Yu points out that "digital China" has

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[35] Zhao Yuezhi, "Shehui zhuyi kuawenhua chuanbo zhengzhi jingjixue" [The political economy of socialist cross-cultural communication], *Xueshu qianyan*, no. 1 (November 2020): 14–41.

[36] Lu Xinyu and Zhao Yuezhi, "Zhongguo de xiandaixing, dazhong chuanmei yu gonggongxing de chonggou."

[37] Sha Yao and Zhao Yuezhi, "Chonggou Zhongguo chuanboxue—chuanbo zhengzhi jingji xuezhe Zhao Yuezhi jiaoshou zhuanfang" [Reconstructing Chinese communication studies—an interview with Professor Zhao Yuezhi, a political economist of communication studies], *Xinwen jizhe*, no. 1 (2015): 5–14.

[38] Zhao Yuezhi, "Shehui zhuyi kuawenhua chuanbo zhengzhi jingjixue."

[39] Lu Xinyu, "Shilun shehui zhuyi gonggong chuabo tixi" [On socialist public communication system], *Kaifang shidai*, no. 1 (2019): 63–66.

become a strategic approach and an important scenario for seeking new ideas, new dynamics, and new advantages in developing globally and should be oriented toward the goal of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.[40] Ji Deqiang argues that digital infrastructure should have a public nature to serve the comprehensive deepening of reform and grassroots governance, and thus the goal should be to build a digital media platform to guide public opinion and serve the people.[41]

Reconceptualizing the "Medium"

Within the framework of the mainstream communication science represented by Schramm, the "medium" is only an instrument for carrying messages, and the focus of communication research is on only the "content" or the "effect" of the communication process. This view of the media has gradually lost its interpretive power. In contrast, in 2011 a series of commemorative events were held in Chinese academia on the centennial of McLuhan's birth, and over the next three years journalism journals such as the *Chinese Journal of Journalism and Communication* published related forums. As a series of theoretical texts on media were translated and introduced, these events marked the beginning of a paradigm shift in the understanding and study of media in China.

Two books by Robert K. Logan were translated into China: *Understanding the New Media: Extending Marshall McLuhan* (in 2012) and *McLuhan Misunderstood: Setting the Record Straight* (in 2018). Logan refuted various "misinterpretations" of McLuhan in Western academia and promoted McLuhan and his understanding of "media" in Chinese academia, where interest has grown. Translations of other media theory monographs have followed: Regis Debray's *Introduction à la Médiologie* in 2014, *Cours de Médiologie Générale* in 2014, and *Manifestes medialogiques* in 2016; Friedrich A. Kittler's *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* in 2017; Stig Hjarvard's *The Mediatization of Culture and Society* in 2018; and Lance Strate's *Amazing Ourselves to Death* in 2020, among others. The book series *Meijie daoshuo* [Media doctrine] was established in 2019. In this context,

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[40] Hong Yu, "Xieshou jiangou wangluo kongjian mingyun gongtongti [EB/OL]" [Building a community of destiny in cyberspace together (EB/OL)], accessed October 23, 2019, http://www.cmic.zju.edu.cn/2019/1104/c35569a1753466/page.htm.

[41] Ji Deqiang, "Meiti ronghe: Dazao shuzi shidai de jichu sheshi" [Media convergence: Building infrastructure in the digital age], *Qingnian jizhe*, no. 24 (2019): 4.

Hu Yiqing believes that a "media theory paradigm" has begun to emerge.[42] Liu Hailong, Rui Bifeng, Sun Wei, and other scholars have explored the embodiment of media from the perspective of phenomenology; Dai Yuchen has studied the Nordic theory of mediatization and examined the issue of urban communication from the perspective of media materiality.[43] In addition, Chen Weixing has systematically interpreted the problematic, conceptual, and historical aspects of Debray's media studies, and Che Zhixin has studied Kittler's genealogical critique of media systems in different historical periods.[44] Scholars such as Sun Xinru and Sha Yao have conducted a series of studies on rural cultural rituals from the perspective of media studies. The New History of Newspapers research team at Fudan University can also be placed in this group of efforts.

The "medium" is now valued not only as an object of study but also as a perspective and methodology. In a new media-centric way, communication studies has made its own interpretative space through retrospective approaches. Media archaeology and the materiality of media are beginning to flourish, and the influence of this work from Europe presents an alternative path of communication studies in China that is worth ongoing attention.

[42] Hu Yiqing and Wang Huanchao, "Meijie lilun fanshi de xingqi: Jiyu butong xuepai de bijiao fenxi" [The emergence of media theory paradigm: A comparative analysis based on different schools of thought], *Xiandai chuanbo: Zhongguo chuanmei daxue xuebao* 42, no. 4 (2020): 24–30.

[43] Liu Hailong and Shuang Kairong, "Jushenxing yu chuanbo yanjiu de shenti guannian—zhijue xianxiang yu renzhi kexue de shijiao" [Embodiment and the body concept in communication research—perspectives from perceptual phenomenology and cognitive science], *Lanzhou daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 47, no. 2 (2019): 80–89; Rui Bifeng and Sun Shuang, "Cong lishen dao jushen—meijie jishu de shengcunlun zhuanxiang" [From disembodiment to embodiment—the existential turn of media technology], *Guoji xinwen jie* 42, no. 5 (2020): 7–17; Sun Wei, "Jiaoliuzhe de shenti: Chuanbo yu zaichang—yishi zhuti, shenti-zhuti, zhineng zhuti de yanbian" [The communicator's body: Communication and presence—the evolution of the conscious subject, the body-subject, and the intelligent subject], *Guoji xinwen jie* 40, no. 12 (2018): 83–103; Dai Yuchen, "Meijiehua yanjiu: Yizhong xinde chuanbo yanjiu fanshi" [Mediatization research: A new paradigm of communication research], *Anhui daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 42, no. 2 (2018): 147–56; Dai Yuchen, "'Wu' yeshi chengshi zhong de xingdongzhe ma?—lijie chengshi chuanbo fenxi de wuzhixing weidu" [Are "things" also actors in the city?—understanding the material dimension of urban communication analysis], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu* 27, no. 3 (2020): 54–67, 127.

[44] Chen Weixing and Regis Debray, "Meijixue: Guannian yu mingti—guyu meijiexue de xueshu duitan" [Media studies: Concepts and propositions—a scholarly conversation on media studies], *Nanjing shehui kexue*, no. 4 (2015): 101–6, 139; Che Zhixin, *Meijie jishu huayu de puxi: Jitele sixiang yanjiu* [The genealogy of media technology discourse: A study of Kittler's thought] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2019).

Journalism with Chinese Characteristics

The phrase "journalism with Chinese characteristics" began to circulate after the Symposium on the Work of Philosophy and Social Sciences hosted by President Xi Jinping in 2016. The journalism community responded to the speech Xi gave by proposing "to build a disciplinary system with Chinese characteristics and universal significance" and by explicitly listing journalism as one of the eleven disciplines "with a supporting role for philosophy and social science."[45] To a large extent, the phrase is also a reaction to the liberal view of journalism, the organization of media with private property rights, and practice of journalistic professionalism in China for thirty years. After the boom of urban newspapers in the 1990s, journalistic professionalism has become unsustainable in the rising tide of social media in the new millennium. In the past five years, research on this issue in journalism and communication studies can be divided into three areas.

First, the study of Xi Jinping's important statements on the press and public opinion. Xi Jinping's statements are the latest development in the "party newspaper" view of journalism and reflect new changes in party politics. Scholars such as Tong Bing, Yin Yungong, Chen Lidan, and Ji Weimin[46] have focused their work on the implications of Xi Jinping's speeches for the work of the press and public opinion, ideology, and network information security.

Second, the methodology of constructing journalistic theory with Chinese characteristics. Researchers are exploring how to establish a disciplinary system, academic system, and discursive system with both Chinese characteristics and universal significance. Lu Xinyu advocates restating the relationship between the organization, propaganda, and the century-long organization and

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[45] Xi Jinping, "Zai zhexue shehuikexue gongzuo zuotanhui shang de jianghua" [Talks at the Forum on Philosophy and Social Science Work], *Renmin ribao*, May 19, 2016, 2.

[46] Tong Bing, "Makesi zhuyi xinwenguan Zhongguohua de dianfan—xuexi *Xi Jinping xinwen sixian jiangyi* xinde" [A model of the Chinese-ization of the Marxist concept of journalism—insights from studying the *Lecture notes on Xi Jinping's journalistic thought*], *Xinwen jizhe*, no. 8 (2018): 4–9; Yin Yungong, "Xi Jinping xinwen yulun sixiang xinlinian" [Xi Jinping's new concept of news and public opinion], *Xinwen yu xiezuo*, no. 4 (2016): 1; Chen Lidan, "Jichi dangxing, zunzhong guilü, yi renmin wei zhongxin—Xi Jinping xinwen yulunguan de liangge yaodian he yige luojiaodian" [Adhering to party spirit, respecting the law, and putting the people at the center—two main points and one anchor point of Xi Jinping's view of news and public opinion], *Xinwen jizhe*, no. 7 (2018): 8–10; Ji Weimin and Ye Jun, "Lun Xi Jinping xinwen sixiang" [On Xi Jinping's journalistic thought], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu* 25, no. 4 (2018): 5–16, 126.

communication of Leninist political parties.[47] Zhao Yuezhi advocates abandoning the increasingly troubled model of Western journalism, especially the Cold War tradition of communication studies and professionalism under capitalist logic, in order to reconstruct Chinese journalism and communication.[48] In addition, Li Bin has also discussed this issue in a series of articles on "journalism of the Chinese way."

Finally, the study of the journalistic ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. In 2015 the Institute of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences completed its three-volume anthology *Makesi zhuyi xinwen chuanbo shilun de yanjiu lichen* [The research history of Marxist journalism and communication theory], which compiles the history of Marxist journalism and communication in China since the 1980s. In this regard, Li Haibo takes the innovation of party politics during the 1940s as a clue to sort out and analyze the internal rationale and operational mechanism of the mass line in journalism (methods of handling the relationship between the Communist Party and the masses).[49] Xiang Fen sorts out some historical issues in the debate between "party spirit" and "nature of the people" and documents the emergence of the "Yan'an view of journalism."[50]

All three of these areas demonstrate the importance of the combination of history and theory in responding to the historical experience and practical dilemmas of "journalism with Chinese characteristics."

[47] Lu Xinyu, "Disan shijie shiyexia de 'Zhongguo daolu' yu dangbao lilun" [The "Chinese way" and party journalistic theory from the third world perspective], *Jingji daokan*, no. 10 (2020): 94–96.

[48] Sha Yao and Zhao Yuezhi, "Chonggou Zhongguo chuanboxue—chuanbo zhengzhi jingji xuezhe Zhao Yuezhi jiaoshou zhuanfang."

[49] Li Haibo, "Danbao, Liening zhuyi zhengdang yu qunzhong zhengzhi canyu—Yan'an xinwenye qunzhong luxian de yunzuo jili fenxi" [Party newspapers, Leninist parties, and mass political participation—an analysis of the operational mechanism of the mass line in Yan'an journalism], *Guoji xinwen jie* 40, no. 3 (2018): 19–39.

[50] Xiang Fen, "Lilun huixiang: Cong 'dangxing yu dulixing wenti' dao 'dangxing yu renminxing zhi zheng" [Theoretical repercussions: From "the question of party spirit and independence" to "the dispute between party spirit and nature of the people"], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu* 25, no. 10 (2018): 5–17, 126; Xiang Fen, "Fanshi liebian: Yan'an xinwenguan de xingqi" [Paradigm shift: The rise of the Yan'an view of journalism], *Lanzhou daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 47, no. 6 (2019): 55–63.

Concluding Remarks

Today, "telling the Chinese story well" is a concern for all levels of society. Worldwide, old paradigms are in crisis and new ones are brewing. The problem of journalism and communication is an important area for discussing the globalization crisis and for finding the way out of it. The Chinese journalism and communication studies communities have both the obligation and wherewithal to take up this historical responsibility, but there is still a long way to go.

Translated from the Chinese

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