Global Media Spectacle

News War over Hong Kong

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Chapter 1

Global Event, National Prisms

> What the fireworks of international news illuminate or leave in the dark is the historic panorama beyond them.
>
> —Jaap van Ginneken (1998: 126)

> Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.
>
> —George Orwell (1954: 177)

> A thin massive event: a small pellet of fish food being attacked by 8,000 piranhas.
>
> —Chris Wood, a Canadian journalist, on covering the handover of Hong Kong

It is often claimed that media discourse represents "a site of symbolic struggle," but what are the processes, significance, and limits of that struggle? As a global "media event" (Dayan and Katz, 1992), the transfer of Hong Kong from British to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997 provides such a site and moment for opposing *national* media communities to express, and thus reinforce, their enduring values and dominant ideologies. More than 8,000 journalists and 778 media organizations from around the world reportedly congregated in this bustling city to witness an event of presumed global significance.[1] The political periphery of Hong Kong stands in sharp contrast to its status as a core hub of global capitalism. Yet journalists are far more interested in China than in Hong Kong. They are interested in China not so much as an ideologically benign site of geography, as it is a rising economic power, a security risk, and an ideological foe in the post-Cold War era. They participate in the embedded ideological struggle among various modern *-isms*: East versus West, capitalism versus socialism, democracy versus authoritarianism. As *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman puts it vividly, Hong Kong's return to China is "not just a

slice of the West being given back to the East," but also "a slice of the future being given back to the past" (December 15, 1996). What marks for China national triumph over colonialism is, in the eyes of most western journalists, "a menacing, authoritarian Chinese government, its hands still stained by the blood of Tiananmen Square, riding roughshod over freewheeling, Westernized Hong Kong" (Chinoy, 1999: 394). The world media had worried about brutal Communist China turning Hong Kong into Tiananmen II. When that scary scenario did not come to pass, their interest in Hong Kong quickly faded away after the handover.[2] In view of Hong Kong's relative stability, the world media cast all but a casual glance at the neighboring Macau (a big casino showcasing capitalist vices) when it returned from Portugal to China two years later.

In the shadow of cultural and technological globalization (Braman and Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996; Featherstone, 1995; Featherstone and Lash, 1995; Tomlinson, 1999; Waters, 1995), we wish to show in this volume that international newsmaking remains inherently ethnocentric, nationalistic, and even state-centered. Globalization may have brought the world "closer" in many ways. But global news continues to acquire paradoxically domestic, local, and above all *national* significance. The same event may be given distinct media representations by various nations, through the prisms of their dominant ideologies as defined by power structures, cultural repertoires, and politico-economic interests. Journalists try to illuminate complex and ambiguous political realities in remote foreign places through the process of "domestication" (Cohen et al., 1996). If international news is a state-centered enterprise, Hong Kong's sovereignty transfer explicitly foregrounds this nation-state problematic.

News is about the unexpected, the extraordinary, and the abnormal, but it can only be understood in terms of the expected, the ordinary, and the normal. As an event must be understood in relation to a whole stream of previous causes, collating selected facts into certain relationships is based on embedded cultural and national perspectives. van Ginneken (1998: 126) puts it so well: "What the fireworks of international news illuminate or leave in the dark is the historic panorama beyond them." In general, these media frames coincide with, echo, and support elite consensus within the established order. Moreover, the state, as a repository of "national interest," is a major contestant in international news discourse. As the media foreground the sovereignty reversion of Hong Kong as historical ruptures, lurking in the background are the ideological continuities of their nations toward China. Major western media do not recognize their quasi-consensual ideology but naturalize it as common sense. They emphasize the facts, but disguise the underlying ideology.

Nevertheless, the ceding of the "capitalist jewel" to a Communist regime, against the grand narratives of "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992) and "the clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1993), is a rallying cry for national media resources to reinforce their core values and reaffirm the power structure. Interna-

tional journalism is in this sense an ideological war, a discursive contestation, or a symbolic struggle. From the perspective of comparative sociology of news-making, we wish to show how international journalists take part in a post-Cold War ideological discourse through making sense of a "media spectacle" (Edelman, 1988). The handover of Hong Kong is a media event that undergoes a transformation—thus robbed of conflict, suspense, and theatrical appeal. This does not prevent the world media, cum various national cultural arms, from plunging into discursive struggles to promote the legitimacy of their national regimes. The media utilize a set of rhetorical strategies from the entertainment-based media logic (Altheide and Snow, 1979) to articulate their ideological themes. The collusion of national interests and foreign policy goals on the one hand and the media interests in enthralling large audiences on the other brings the world media together to stage a global media spectacle in collaboration with their domestic authorities. It is illuminating to note that these international journalists come all the way to interview a small (probably no more than fifty) and highly overlapping set of people, mostly from the elite but with some token "ordinary folks" to put a "typical" face on the news. But different national narratives enable journalists to insert the present into a highly ideological perspective on the past and the future. In most foreign policy issues, media differences across the ideological divide *within* a nation tend to be dwarfed by media differences *between* nations. Such national perspectives interact with the sociological arrangement of the theater of the handover events as well as the rhetorical strategies of the media logic, making it appropriate to talk about the handover as a global media spectacle fitted with varying national themes.

International News and Discursive Struggles

Discourse is at the heart of a nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). It reproduces the society as a coherent unit of culture, allowing its members to envision a sense of belonging and identity vis-à-vis other units. A discursive community comprises a group of people who feel bound through shared interpretations and representations of their everyday experiences within a common cultural, political, and economic environment (Fish, 1980; Lincoln, 1989; Wuthnow, 1989). The discursive binding of such a community shines particularly at critical moments when certain events of historic proportions inspire a wealth of symbolic resources to solidify cultural values. These events force members of a society to form their self-conceptions through cultural practices and thus renew their shared identity.

The ceding of Hong Kong to a Communist regime in the post-Cold War era represents one of those "hot moments" to different national communities in varying degrees. In this study, as said above, we start with the premise that

on the global scale, different national communities will construct different media discourses about an issue of such momentous ideological import. It is true that globalization of modern media has made the symbolic bond of a community often more dependent on mediated representations than on territoriality (Appadurai, 1996), but international news about distant events happening in faraway places must be "brought home" via discursive means. Cultural representations of a "discursive community" are closely related to the activities and artifacts of their producers in concrete social and historical settings. Media discourse, in Wuthnow's words (1989: 16), occurs within "the communities of competing producers, of interpreters and critics, of audiences and consumers, and of patrons and other significant actors who become subjects of discourse itself." This sociological grounding calls for an examination of how different media discourses invoke their cultural symbols on behalf of their national interests, and how they articulate enduring values of the society often in support of the power authority.

Put otherwise, mass media stand at the forefront of institutional venues through which each national community acts out its shared experiences and the underlying cultural premises (Edelman, 1988; Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1994). Events of historic importance absorb the "attention resources" of the public arena (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988), which "tames" a distant event through selective domestication in tandem with core social values. Global news must be filtered through the domestic system of commonsense knowledge (Berger and Luckman, 1967) or "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1993); media texts are constructed in the multilayered organizational, cultural, economic, and political frameworks. We aim to achieve some understanding about the discursive contestation of national media systems in the international terrain over tensions between cultural particulars and transcendent values. These tensions sharpen the continuities and ruptures between national interests in the world order.

The handover of Hong Kong forms a concentric circle of relevance and vested interests to various national discursive communities and is thus open to divergent media construction. International newsmaking follows the same logic of domestic newsmaking, but under different political conditions. It is widely accepted that the media produce and reproduce the hegemonic definitions of social order. There are four general claims to this overall thesis. First, "news net" of the media (Tuchman, 1978) corresponds to the hierarchical order of political power and the prevailing belief system that defines this order. Occurrences outside the centralized organizations or standard genres would not be recognized as news. Secondly, even in a democratic society, news production must inevitably epitomize the capitalist mode of production and serve the financial-ideological structure and interests of the dominant class, race, and gender (Mosco, 1996; Thompson, 1990). Thirdly, the ideology of journalistic professionalism, as enshrined by the creed of objectivity, is predicated on an

unarticulated commitment to the established order (Gitlin, 1980; Said, 1978; Schlesinger, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). News media "index" the spectrum of the elite viewpoints as an essential tool for domestic political operation (Bennett, 1990; Cook, 1998). In a similar vein, Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1995) maintain that the media perform as a sentry not for the community as a whole, but for groups having sufficient power and influence to create and control their own security systems. Fourthly, when elite consensus collapses or is highly divided, or when there is strong mobilizing pressure from social movements, the media may have to reflect such opinion plurality (Chan and Lee, 1991; Hallin, 1986; Page, 1996). Such plurality does not, however, question the fundamental assumptions of power in society.

The international order being more anarchic, the *state*—rather than specific individuals, classes, or sectors within a country—acts as the repository of "national interest" (Garnett, 1994), as the principal maker of foreign policy, and as a contestant in international news discourse (Snyder and Ballentine, 1997: 65). Operating as "little accomplices" of the state (Zaller and Chiu, 1996), the media rely on political authorities to report foreign policy cum national interest. Moreover, the media, the domestic authorities, and the public tend to perceive the international news reality through shared lenses of ideologies, myths, and cultural repertoire. The media resolve around the head of state, foreign ministry, and embassies to make news because these institutions are assumed to have superior if not monopolistic access to knowledge about what national interest is abroad. Foreign news agendas are even more closely attuned to elite conceptions of the world than domestic news agendas. The U.S. media therefore tend to "rally around the flag" in close alliance with official Washington (Brody, 1991; Cook, 1998), especially when the country is in conflict with foreign powers. By this process of "domesticating" foreign news as a variation on a national theme (Cohen et al., 1996), the media serve to sharpen and legitimize national perspectives embedded in the existing order of power and privilege (chapter 3). Gans (1979) maintains that in the U.S. media, foreign news stories are mostly relevant to Americans or American interests, with the same themes and topics as domestic news; when the topics are distinctive, they are given interpretations that apply to American values. Media domestication is an integral part of the international political economy.

News media participate in a broader discursive process in constructing the domestic elite's images of "the other" and legitimizing the state's effort in safeguarding geopolitical interests abroad (Said, 1981, 1993). They produce a local narrative of the same global event through employment of unique discursive means of rhetoric, frames, metaphors, and logic. In "tangling" with distant contestants in the game of international newsmaking, they impute different causes and effects to reality to advance national interest and promote national legitimacy. During the Persian Gulf War, CNN became a stage for the U.S. and Iraqi

governments to verbally attack each other, paving the way for and extending the eventual armed conflict (Kellner, 1992). Unlike the institutional struggle in which central authority allocates tangible material resources (Jabri, 1996: 72), the discursive struggle wins or loses symbolically in terms of expression of preferred values and orders. The latter may be mobilized into an institutional struggle, while the former may derive its legitimacy from a discursive struggle (Edelman, 1971; Gamson, 1988; McAdams, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996). During the Cold War, superpowers contested over intangible public opinion, images, and rhetorical discourse in order, ironically, to prevent the hot wars of guns and missiles (Medhurst, 1990).

The Making of a Media Event

The arrival of the world media turns Hong Kong into a theater of performance. Although the basic script for the event was long written in the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, the actual staging of its performance had been in serious dispute between the two principals (Lee, 1997, 2000a). The handover is thus a long anticipated and carefully scripted event that unfolds with real and potential drama of conflicts. The predictability of its prescheduled nature facilitates "calendar journalism" (Tuchman, 1978). Following the meticulously scripted events may neither require much enterprising journalistic effort (Sigal, 1973) nor satisfy the "entertainment logic" of television age (Altheide and Snow, 1979). Yet, given the logic that bad news is good news and given the rancorous diplomatic skirmishes and war of words between Britain and China until the final moment, the world media had committed considerable resources to covering an event of presumed worst-case scenarios under Communist takeover. But the handover turns out to be smooth and peaceful, not as bad as previously envisaged. Somewhat disappointed, the large presence of international journalists in a crowded island becomes a story—a media spectacle—more important than the event itself. A Canadian journalist compares this "thin massive event" to "a small pellet of fish food being attacked by 8,000 piranhas." *Newsweek*'s bureau chief, when asked, agrees that thousands of competitive egos probably end up talking to the same set of 20 to 50 people in town, but the *Daily Telegraph* reporter defends this practice as an inherent logic of journalism not different from covering South Africa or Bosnia. The logic of making news is hijacked by the logic of staging a media spectacle.

According to Dayan and Katz (1992), a media event may fall into one of three categories: a contest, a conquest, or a coronation. In spite of consuming efforts made by the dismayed international journalists, the handover story did not seem to rise to various qualifications of a *spectacular* media event. As it began, the event seemed to contain all the exciting elements of a conquest or

those of a contest. As the event went through a process of transformation during its life cycle, elements of a contest and conquest receded, and the media began to focus on it more as a coronation.

First, a contest "pits evenly matched individuals or teams against each other and bids them to compete according to strict rules" (Dayan and Katz, 1992: 33). Media events of this type should generate much excitement over the process of competition and reduce the uncertainty about its outcome. The Sino-British rows over sovereignty negotiations and Governor Patten's democratic reforms (Dimbleby, 1997) began to fade in significance as Hong Kong inched toward the handover.

Second, a conquest refers to great men and women with charisma who "submit themselves to an ordeal, whose success multiplies their charisma and creates a new following" (Dayan and Katz, 1992: 37). Indeed, all of China's official and media proclamations hail Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader, as the ingenious author of the "one country, two systems" idea, through which the previously impossible task of reclaiming Hong Kong becomes a reality. Thus, Chinese patriotic heroes roundly beat British imperialist villains. China's official television constantly shows a picture of Margaret Thatcher falling on her steps in front of the Great Hall of the People, almost as a favorite icon that "provides an occasion for journalists and their sources to refigure cultural scripts" (Bennett and Lawrence, 1995). The Prime Minister had just emerged from her first excruciating encounter with Deng, during which he lectured her that China would not take humiliation from foreign powers any more. That showdown forced both sides to embark on painful negotiations leading finally to the handover. This icon was coined in 1982, and by 1997 Thatcher had retired from public life and Deng was already dead, but the image lives on as a soothing symbol of conquest for China's injured national psyche. The People's Republic of China (PRC) media are also fond of flexing military icons to relish the story of national strength in front of the doubting world. To counter this, the world media depict that the small and efficient Hong Kong will play the role of a "Trojan Horse" to subvert the huge and clumsy Communist China from within. This story of conquest is, however, set in the future, and its confirmation requires a time horizon that goes far beyond the drowning ritual ceremonies.

A coronation, a third kind of media event, deals in "the mysteries of rites of passage" which "proceed according to strict rules, dictated by tradition rather than by negotiated agreement" (Dayan and Katz, 1992: 36). Media coverage of a coronation serves to pledge allegiance to the political center and to renew contract with it. Persons of authority are signified and dignified by costumes, symbols, titles, and rituals. Media presentation, which tends to be reverent and priestly, enacts the tradition and authority that are usually hidden from everyday life. A prime icon of Hong Kong's handover coronation is a picture of the brief moment at the midnight of June 30, seemingly frozen in

history. The Union Jack is being lowered, and the Chinese flag being raised. All principal actors—including Prince Charles, President Jiang, Governor Patten, and Chief Executive Tung—are solemnly arrayed on the stage to commemorate a change in the authority structure and to usher in formal absorption of Hong Kong into the motherland. In spite of its historical significance this still moment produces no lively journalism.

The media event thus transformed, journalists must do something to save the integrity of their paradigmatic structure. They repair part of the assumptions, cull more supporting data, dismiss contrary evidence, or try to fit their stories into generic narrative structures of media events (Bennett, Gressett, and Haltom, 1985; Chan and Lee, 1991). Above all, they must "hype" up the event in hopes that their domestic audiences may find reasons to participate in the media rites and rituals. Through the display of repetitive, familiar, and exaggerated images often out of the context, hyping creates a mythical ritual that is confirming of the dominant ideological framework (Nimmo and Combs, 1990). The media are not passive reflectors of the media event, but active participants in its making. The media not only provide a stage for an event scripted by authoritative agencies outside of media; they also "coauthor" the event with event organizers and their own domestic authority structure. They rescript the event to fit their respective national narrative and annotate the performance of the principal actors with reverence. They add their own "star performers"—the celebrity anchors and famed correspondents—to share the stage with, if not take over the title role from, the actors of the official script. They hype the elements of the event in resonance with the domestic audiences.

Methodology

This study interweaves (a) indepth interviews with international journalists, (b) a content analysis, and (c) a discourse analysis of elite newspapers and television networks from eight countries or regions. The main body of evidence comes from a discourse analysis of media representations. The result of content analysis provides information about the basic parameter and orientation of media coverage. Interviews with journalists are indispensable to understanding the sociology of news regarding their professional biographies, organizational resources and strategies, news competition and collaboration, and the cultural map on which they draw to cover the handover. These interviews generate important insights for formulating and confirming the "ideological packages" in our constructionist discourse analysis. Published documents, press reports, the proceedings of media fora and symposia, and our field notes fill the background gaps in terms of the motives, actions, and behind-the-scene maneuvers of various key individuals and regimes, thus

piercing through the surface of media content. Needless to say, all of them are to be interpreted in light of the insights we have built up over two decades as critical analysts of the media in Hong Kong and elsewhere (Chan and Lee, 1991; Lee, 1997, 2000; So and Chan, 1999). Without doubt, our comparative framework sharpens our interpretation of media accounts.

Countries and Media Outlets

To investigate the national prisms through which the handover of Hong Kong is inflected, we select for examination eight "national" media systems that form a concentric circle of relevance and vested interest: the PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, and Japan. Within the immediate circle of relevance are the primary constituencies of "Cultural China" (Tu, 1991)—namely, the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—fraught with conflicting identities and historical memories. (Strictly speaking, Hong Kong is not a "nation" but a British colony returning to the PRC's possession, while Taiwan has *de facto* but not *de jure* nationhood, constantly struggling against the PRC over issues of national sovereignty. To avoid repeated references to more accurate yet cumbersome "nations or regions," we shall treat Hong Kong and Taiwan as if they were "nations.") In broader circles of relevance, the PRC seems ideologically at war with the outside world at large, in what appears to be an extended East-West conflict. Not only has the outgoing Britain marshaled possible moral, political, and media resources to fend off assaults on its legitimacy from the PRC. The United States, particularly, has led a western ideological united front in support of Britain against China in this power game of words and images. Incorporated as junior partners in the western camp are Canada, Australia, and to some extent, Japan, which display different national interest within the common western ideology.

We set out to select a sample of 32 newspapers, four news magazines, 14 television channels, and seven news agencies from the eight countries (Table 1.1). The criteria for selection include:

- Influence in terms of circulation and the perceived status.
- The range of ideological variation with a national media system.
- Level of operation: International, national, regional, and local.
- Modes of financial operation: Official organ or private enterprise.
- Type of medium: Newspapers, magazines, television, and news agencies.
- Type of audience: General interest or specialized interest.

Table 1.1
The Sample of Media Outlets[1]

Countries	Print Media	TV	News Agencies
PRC	*People's Daily**	CCTV*	Xinhua
(n = 8)	*Economic Daily*	Guangzhou TV	
	People's Liberation Army Daily		
	Guangming Daily		
	*Guangzhou Daily**		
USA	*New York Times**	CBS*	AP
(n = 11)	*Washington Post**	CNN*	
	*Wall Street Journal**		
	*Chicago Tribune**		
	*Los Angeles Times**		
	*Des Moines Register**		
	San Jose Mercury News		
	Newsweek (magazine)		
Britain	*The Times**	BBC*	Reuters
(n = 8)	*Guardian**	ITV*	
	*Daily Telegraph**		
	*Independent**		
	Financial Times		
Hong Kong	*Ming Pao Daily News**	TVB*	(GIS)[2]
(n = 10)	*South China Morning Post**	CTV	
	*Apple Daily**	CTN	
	Oriental Daily News		
	Yazhou Zhoukan (magazine)		
	Far Eastern Economic Review (magazine)		

(continued)

We compile media content of the sampled organizations from two weeks before the handover and one week after it, thus covering the period between June 16 and July 5, 1997. We ask many professional colleagues in various locales to collect the sampled newspaper issues and to tape sampled television programs (including regular evening news, special programs, and live coverage on June 30). It should be noted that we decide not to include the endless stream of wire stories in further analysis, although we do incorporate insights from interview with wire reporters. We are also confident that the "discursive packages" of news agencies do not differ markedly from those of print media and television.

Table 1.1 *(continued)*
The Sample of Media Outlets[1]

Countries	Print Media	TV	News Agencies
Taiwan (n = 7)	*China Times**	TTV*	Central
	United Daily News		
	Central Daily News		
	Liberty Times		
	Mingzhong Daily		
Japan (n = 7)	*Asahi Shimbun*	NHK	Kyodo
	Yomiuri Shimbun	Asahi	
	Sankei Shimbun		
	Nihon Keizai Shimbun		
Australia (n = 2)	*The Australian**	ATV*	
Canada (n = 5)	*Globe and Mail**	CBC*	Canadian Press
	MacLean's (magazine)		Southam News

Notes:
1. All print media and television outlets listed in this table are qualitatively examined in the discourse analysis. Only those with * are also content-coded. We do not examine the news agencies in either study. For further information, see Appendix I–IV.
2. The Government Information Services serves the international journalists by providing press releases, briefings, field trips, and other assistance.

Interviews

Based on this media sample, we interview a total of 76 journalists (Table 1.2), including 37 from the print media, 29 from the broadcasting media, and 10 from news agencies. The country distribution is, except for Australia, fairly balanced. (See Appendix II for a complete list of interviewees.) Most interviews are based on a detailed, semistructured protocol (Appendix III), each lasting 30 to 180 minutes, fully taped and transcribed. A small number of interviews take the form of more casual conversation to validate our inferences from more formal interviews. Many of the interviewees are Hong Kong-based, others on special assignment for the occasion.

We aim to discern patterns of professional journalists at work within various organizational and cultural milieus. We probe journalists on (a) their professional biography; (b) their working conditions in relation to the sources, editors, competitors, and audience; and particularly (c) their discursive activities—namely, invocation of themes, frames, images, and metaphors to narrate the story. This thick description of their professional world later comes to life, enriching our interpretations of the stories they produce. We ask them to name a story they think would

Table 1.2
National Origins of Journalists Interviewed

	Print Media	Broadcasting	News Agencies	Total
PRC	2	4	1	7
USA	7	2	1	10
Britain	5	4	0	9
Hong Kong	7	4	0	11
Taiwan	6	9	2	17
Japan	4	3	4	11
Australia	1	1	0	2
Canada	5	2	2	9
Total	37	29	10	76

capture the essence of Hong Kong. This would lead to a better understanding about how they draw on certain political ideology and cultural repertoire in the process of "translating" foreign reality for their home audiences. We also ask them about their game plan for covering a series of competing events situated in the web of time and geography on the day of the handover. It is important to know how they construct the news net, divide the labor, and cope with intense competitive pressure under the punishing deadline.

At first glance, the interviews seem to suggest the emergence of a "global" culture of professional journalism. Rooted in western origins of market economy and liberal polity, this professional culture seems to have been widely accepted as general if not universal norms of journalistic conduct and judgment (Schudson, 1978; Weaver, 1998). All journalists profess their commitment to the pursuit of fact and "truth," in their capacities as avowed observers, transmitters, and interpreters of reality, and they take offense at being viewed as partisan activists with an ideological ax to grind. Even Communist journalists from the PRC seem no longer to hold their Leninist teachings with deep conviction (He, 2000; Pan, 2000; Zhao, 1998). This general impression is superficial and shallow at best, for what constitutes the fact or truth is culturally relative and ideologically indeterminate. Despite being professional cynics, journalists usually do not defy the assumptions of the power structure in their work (Gans, 1979; Manoff and Schudson, 1986; Schlesinger, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). Media discourses in the international terrain, in particular, tend to possess strong national personalities that sharpen the us-against-them boundaries in reductive and limiting categories (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Lee and Yang, 1995; Said, 1981). Notwithstanding claims to the contrary, this reliance on national ideology is also true of such global-scale media outlets as the BBC or CNN that speak in perfect English to the elite in the rest of the world.

Content Analysis

Of the sampled media outlets, we perform a content analysis of a subsample of 26 outlets totaling 3,883 stories, across seven media systems except Japan (Table 1.1). The main purpose is to set the basic comparative parameter of media coverage, but content analysis does not yield a deep understanding of the discursive structures. Appendix IV provides a more detailed description of the research procedure.

Three general points deserve initial remarks here. First, all eight media systems have covered the handover extensively (see Appendix IV for statistics). In terms of newspaper space, Hong Kong and the PRC rank highest, followed by Taiwan, Australia, and Canada. The United States ranks lower because the "local" papers devote a smaller space to the handover, but the elite papers produce large amounts of long interpretative stories. The pattern of television coverage differs only slightly: CCTV (China) ranks the first, followed by TVB (Hong Kong) and TTV (Taiwan), and Australian, British, and U.S. networks.

Second, the handover, as a prescheduled calendar event, has a clear life cycle. Media coverage peaks on June 30 and July 1. During the prehandover preparatory period (June 16–29), daily media coverage is only 11% to 33% of the amount produced in the peak period. The posthandover coverage (July 2–5) tapers off to range from 7% to 39% of the amount produced in the peak period.

Thirdly, as will also be clear (Table 3.1), the PRC faces a doubting world. The PRC media see no negative change will take place after the handover; in fact, everything in Hong Kong will look brighter under the loving care of the motherland. But those from the four English-speaking countries—the United States, Britain, Australia, and Canada—predict that profound negative change is likely to occur in political, if not economic, areas. Hong Kong and Taiwan media, concerned with self-survival, are also negative but not as negative as the western media. The content analysis confirms and sharpens the results of our discourse analysis.

Discourse Analysis

For the most important part of our work, we take a constructionist approach to discourse analysis as developed by William Gamson and his associates (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, 1989; Gamson et al., 1992) in an effort to link media texts and broader ideological underpinnings of national prisms. We first deconstruct stories that comprise each national media account into what Gamson and Lasch (1983) call "signature matrix," a device that lists the key frames and links them to salient signifying devices. We then reconstruct their major theses into genotypical categories—or what Gamson calls "ideological packages" or "discursive packages"—replete with metaphors, exemplars, catch

phrases, depictions, visual images, roots, consequences, and appeals to principle. These frames serve as an organizing scheme with which journalists provide coherence to their stories and through which some critical issues can be discussed and understood. Gitlin (1980: 7) writes, "Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports." These frames relate media texts to overall social and ideological contexts.

This analysis involves examining the text along the paradigmatic and syntagmatic dimensions (Fiske, 1982). The former calls for an examination of the choices of textual units and their interrelationships within a news paradigm. We focus on "macro" and "midlevel" units in terms of journalists' choice of story details, quoted statements, metaphors, images and exemplars, as well as their source dependence. The syntagmatic dimension concerns the placement of textual units in a syntactic structure according to certain linguistic rules or the "story grammar" of an event (Pan and Kosicki, 1993; van Dijk, 1988). This dimension entails three levels of abstraction, each forming a template for storytelling:

(1) At the level of the story, we must first analyze the "macro structure" (van Dijk, 1988) or "story grammar" (Franzosi, 1989) of news items—how signs are put together according to certain rules. A regular news item consists of the headlines, the lead paragraph, and the story (or event)—woven with actors, actions, and consequences.

(2) We must analyze how official event organizers author a "mega-story" composed of a series of activities and events (with a cast of actors and roles) leading up to the sovereignty transfer. This is an analysis of the "superstructure" or "global structure" (van Dijk, 1988).

(3) We must analyze how, within this "global structure," journalists bring certain professional norms, journalistic paradigms (Bennett, Gressett, and Haltom, 1985; Chan and Lee, 1991), and organizational routine (Tuchman, 1978) to make sense of the events.

In sum, we examine the narrative structure (headline, lead, main body, and sources), the thematic structure (rules of citing sources and evidence to support a theme), and the rhetorical structure (rules and conventions of using certain symbolic resources to create meanings and cultural resonance) of media discourses (Pan and Kosicki, 1993).

We examine the texts of all sampled media organizations (Table 1.1), with an estimated total of 7,600 print stories, hundreds of hours of television coverage, and supplemental magazine stories. Two of us on the team are responsible for analyzing a country to achieve cross-verification. Frequent—initially, almost

daily—communication is conducive to furthering our common understanding about the framework for scrutinizing the discursive packages of each media system. We develop "country reports" based on cross-examining and traversing media texts, interview transcripts, our "other knowledge," and theoretical concepts. We make back-and-forth attempts at proposing alternative and supplemental interpretations to settle some conflicting hypotheses. For example, given our understanding of the general literature, we were initially skeptical about a claim made by a prominent CNN corespondent that his network is an objective international entity not tied to U.S., or any, ideology. We nonetheless treated it as a plausible hypothesis and reminded ourselves to pay special attention in the discourse analysis to determine if there is a significant difference between the ideological structure of CBS and CNN. We found little differences between them and hence rejected his claim (see chapter 3). Painstaking and disciplined cross-fertilization between theoretical concepts and different facets of data has led to the development of thematic outlines as herein presented.

Framework for Analysis

News has to come from somewhere and somebody. It does not reveal itself without human construction. Our framework for analysis, as sketched in Figure 1.1, highlights the following points:

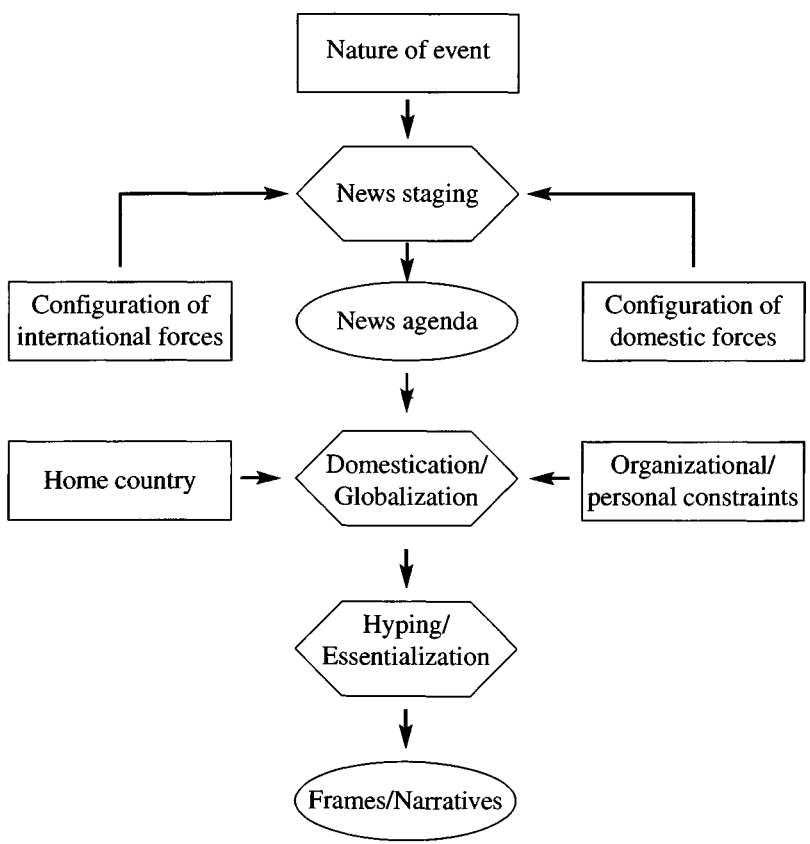
1. International news is a series of complex processes that involves making political, economic, and cultural choices.
2. Each of these news processes is constrained by the political economy of the home country, as well as its role and place in the larger international political economy.
3. Event organizers, often the authorities, produce the first-order script to structure the universe of news activities.
4. Professional journalists, working for and within media organizations, write the second-order script as narratives based on their observations and interpretations—within the constraints mentioned above.

In essence, this volume consists of two major parts: chapters 2–4 deal with the sociological, cultural, and ideological processes and strategies in the making of a global media event, while chapters 5–8 analyze the very stuff of life in discursive contestation.[3] The first part—the sociology of international media—is important in its own right, but it also paves the way for the second part, where national prisms are the central site of ideological wars.

News Staging and News Agendas

The authorities outside the media set the news stage—ranging from the controlled access, facilities and the infrastructure, to schedules and arranged activities—that have a decisive influence on the news flow (chapter 2). The nature of the event—whether prescheduled, conflict-ridden, or fast-paced—varies. The first injunction of journalists is to stay with the facts; they cannot portray a peaceful march as a bloody crackdown. Next, the configuration of domestic and international forces shapes the parameters of potential news topics within which journalists construct their narratives. Journalists transform occurrences into news agendas according to professional norms, orga-

Figure 1.1
Conceptual Scheme of Comparative International Media Discourses



nizational constraints, national values and orientations, and the law of the market. The stronger nations tend to have a stronger media presence. The media enjoy less latitude in setting the agenda if the organizers minutely script the stage. All centralized authorities and dominant nations attempt to control the flow and rhythm of news, even though they cannot completely monopolize it.

Domestication and Globalization

Global news, about events happening in distant places, has to be brought home through the process of "domestication" to make it familiar and intelligible to home audiences (chapter 3). The conversion of a global agenda into a home agenda—that is, treating foreign news as an extension of domestic news—starts out with selective framing of issues or topics through the lens of professional norms, national interest, cultural repertoire, and market dynamics. As the public is generally apathetic to international news, foreign correspondents must go to extra length in imparting relevance or adding entertainment value to the story. This "domestic" perspective tends to be state-articulated "national" perspective, suppressing subnational, local differences. The extent to which the global-scale media outlets (such as CNN and the BBC) can be free from national ideological constraints bears further analysis.

Hyping and Essentialization

Hyping and essentialization are two processes by which news is domesticated and globalized (chapter 4). Hyping is a strategy for the media to reduce the gap between what is expected of a media event and scripted reality, thus bringing to the forefront (and to make up for the lack of) theatrical elements (such as conflict, competition, suspense, and emotion) to electrify the audience. The resultant media product tends to portray a reality that is larger than life. Intensified media competition in the commercial market has made hyping an imperative in today's news business. Essentialization means stripping an event to its core properties as if they were invariant and immutable; the reductive and frozen narratives, often manifested in crude us-against-them cliché, conceal many complex and contradictory contexts of reality. We present a case analysis of essentialized narratives about nationalism and colonialism in chapter 7.

National Prisms: Frames and Narratives

Another core concern is to analyze international newsmaking as a form of ideological contestation (chapters 5–8). As the end product of the news process, these frames and narratives provide journalists with organizing coherence to

their stories, through which some critical issues can be discussed and understood. These frames help organize the world of events both for those who report them as journalists and for those who consume such reports as audience. We shall examine four outstanding discursive battles, each with internal skirmishes.

The first discursive battle is fought between the United States and the PRC over grand ideologies and conflicting systems (chapter 5). The PRC finds itself becoming the chief villain of the U.S. media in the post-Tiananmen era and in the post-Cold War order. Seeing Hong Kong through the ugly mirror of the Tiananmen crackdown, they proclaim that the United States, as a "new guardian," will prevent Hong Kong's fragile democracy and existing freedoms from China's abuse. Hong Kong will also play the "Trojan Horse" role to subvert China's authoritarian system. Television networks are particularly blatant.

Britain and the PRC, the two sovereign powers involved in the handover, join the second discursive battle over the interpretations of colonialism and nationalism (chapter 6). China's media *essentialize* British colonialism as inherently evil while touting Chinese nationalism as inherently supreme; this narrative, while partially valid, loses sight of several key complex and paradoxical historical developments. The British media largely ignore their inglorious colonial beginnings. Instead they *de-essentialize* the evilness of colonialism by emphasizing that Hong Kong is Britain's creation as a free, stable, and prosperous enclave against relentless turmoil in the PRC. They personify Governor Patten as democracy's apostle who stands up to Communist bluster. These selective historical depictions, while partially valid, typify what Said (1978, 1981, 1993) portrays as the imperial construction of Orientalism.

The third discursive battle occurs within "Cultural China" over the meaning of Chinese nationalism, China, and Chinese (chapter 7). The state-controlled PRC media approach the handover primarily as a domestic issue with global implications for national glory. Relying exclusively on domestic and friendly sources, they construct China as a unified nation-state centered in Beijing yet supposedly inclusive of global Chinese communities. The handover is a "national ceremony," marking an end to western colonialism and a beginning to national reunification. On the receiving end, Hong Kong media treat the handover as the unfolding of a crucial chapter in local history, praying that global watch will keep the place out of Beijing-inflicted harm's way. A thriving democracy in search of identity, Taiwan media focus on "what's next" for the island nation.

The fourth discursive struggle concerns a supporting cast of the western camp who seems to fight against the PRC and the United States at the same time over the primacy of ideology and national interests (chapter 8). Both Canada and Australia have become Hong Kong's new diaspora, while Japan has enormous economic interests in Hong Kong. Australia and Japan also em-

phasize their "Asian identity." This means that the "minor three" not only play ideological variations on the western themes of democracy and human rights, but also seek to advance their own economic and security interests that require certain struggle against the U.S. policy.

Finally, we shall conclude this volume in chapter 9 with focused discussions on the implications—the structures, processes, consequences, and limits—of this discursive contestation in relation to media events in the age of globalization.

Epilogue

After the Handover

> Hong Kong is a graveyard for political prognosticators. Everybody predicted we'd have a bumpy ride politically but the economy would take care of itself. Exactly the opposite has happened.
>
> —Daniel R. Fung, Solicitor General of Hong Kong

> The real transition is about identity and not sovereignty.
>
> —Anson Chan, Chief Secretary of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR)

> The economy, not Beijing, is Hong Kong's biggest headache.
>
> —The *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 1998

> Recent events suggest that the one country is rapidly subsuming the two systems.
>
> —The *New York Times*, July 1, 1999

Now Hong Kong is China's, not Britain's. "Hong Kong loses its uniqueness (after the handover) and will be treated as part of the larger China story," as Dorinda Elliot of *Newsweek* prognosticated several days after the fatigue of the "handover hysteria" in 1997. "It will be difficult to keep Hong Kong news alive." The fact, after one year of power transition, is that news has declined but not disappeared. However, since the anniversary, Hong Kong appears to be fading away rapidly from the world's news radar, with the *Guardian* being the only one among the sampled American and British newspapers carrying an anniversary article in the year 2000. Hong Kong turns out to have partly contradicted world journalists in their political and economic predictions, and partly confirmed their perception of the impotence of the new government. In 1997 most media, except those in the People's Republic of China, were pessimistic about Hong Kong's political prospects under Chinese rule but confident about its economic prosperity. Since the first anniversary, they have found just the

opposite: politically Hong Kong is not as bad as previously envisaged; economically, it has been engulfed in a major financial crisis that sweeps across almost the whole of Asia and almost wrecks world economy. Is this enough to revamp the news paradigms of the world media? (The PRC media must reconcile the reality of economic hardship and declining public confidence in the SAR government with the rhetoric of a more "splendid" Hong Kong in the arms of the motherland.) As the sampled American and British media outlets carry only a few articles on Hong Kong during the second and third anniversary of sovereignty transfer, we shall base the current analysis mainly on the coverage of the first anniversary in 1998.

Explaining "the Surprise"

The world media find Hong Kong no longer "the Pearl of the Orient," but a "subdued" place in the midst of an Asian economic meltdown. People are in "no mood to celebrate" the first anniversary of handover; official celebration, BBC News (July 1, 1998) observes, is "gloomy."[1] Even the Chinese official organ, the *People's Daily* (July 1, 1998), admits to the "unusualness" of the situation that tests how "Hong Kong people run Hong Kong." Surprise is a common theme.

Table 10.1 summarizes the main stories or features about the handover carried by selected media from the United States, Britain, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong from June 30 to July 2, 1998.[2] U.S. and British newspapers find that politically Hong Kong "has changed little from colonial days." Hong Kong is "a less prosperous and confident metropolis than it once was" (*Wall Street Journal*, July 1), but few of its "worst problems are the fault of Beijing" (*Los Angeles Times*, July 1). "Defying predictions by experts here and in the West," the *New York Times* (July 1, 1998) reports, "Beijing has left Hong Kong largely untouched." The *Los Angeles Times* even credits China for acting as "a stabilizing force for Hong Kong's economy."

Although the western media seem to have rehabilitated Beijing's credibility in some way, their journalistic paradigms—framing the reality through the lenses of western ideology and systems—remain largely intact. In the international "ideological repair shop" (van Ginneken, 1998: 32), foreign journalists appear to have taken three approaches to repair their news paradigms: (a) by limiting the scope of discrepancies between facts and expectations; (b) by explaining away the troubled facts; and (c) by introducing new criteria.

Limiting the Scope of Discrepancies. Hong Kong is only "better than expected" (BBC News, July 1), but only "the causal observer" will be fooled by the surface impression. Maggie Farley of the *Los Angeles Times* acknowledges little change in Hong Kong before turning around to say that people on the

street may hardly notice "a quiet, incremental adjustment of Hong Kong's political and legal infrastructure"—including "the appearance of favoritism for those with close China connections." Mark Landler of the *New York Times* (July 1, 1998) reports, "Chinese officials are seeking to influence Hong Kong's leaders through hints delivered in back-channel conversations," noting public fears about the integrity of Hong Kong's legal system. Keith Richburg of the *Washington Post* (July 2, 1998) quotes Martin Lee as saying, "It could have been worse." Local democrats—Martin Lee, Emily Lau, Christine Loh, and Margaret Ng—continue to be favored sources.

While sharing this basic framework, the media have their own specific national concerns. The British media privilege their own authoritative figures, while the U.S. media peg their anniversary coverage to President Clinton's trip to China. Stephen Vines (July 2, 1998) of the *Independent* thus starts his report: "Celebrations marking Hong Kong's first year under Chinese rule have given the people of the former British colony an opportunity to feast their eyes on a full scale wax model of Margaret Thatcher." He notes that the celebration started with "dull speeches" by China's President Jiang and Chief Executive Tung. Tung's speech "appeared to have been drafted on a Chinese Communist Party word processor," and the meeting of Jiang and Tung with the performers "was conducted much in the style of the royal variety performances held in a bygone era." Vines's impression (June 30, 1998) that most of the signs of the former colonial administration have been expunged" contrasts that of Richburg in the *Washington Post* that China's hands-off policy has left "them 'untouched.'" Vines claims that "Hong Kong has become a colony of China": Tung's autocratic governing style mimics that of "the great imperial Governors" in the old days, but now he is only one telephone call away from Beijing, "whereas London was a clipper's journey away." Vines continues to iconize Patten as a hero. Taking the home orientation, the *China Times* (June 30, 1998) insists that even if Beijing has behaved well in Hong Kong, the "one country and two systems" framework does not apply to Taiwan. Hong Kong media primarily report about the activities of celebration and Beijing's pledge to help solve the economic crisis.

Explaining Away the Troubling Facts. The *Wall Street Journal* (July 1, 1998) thinks it uncharacteristic of Communist China to leave Hong Kong alone; this restraint stems from "the sophistication of Hong Kong people" who "have segued into a new reality with their standards and expectations intact." The *Washington Post* (July 2, 1998) credits the vocal democrats in Hong Kong and "the vigilance of the international community and the foreign press" for helping to "thwart some of Beijing's most regressive designs for Hong Kong." Despite Beijing's restraint, the *New York Times* (July 2, 1998) uses the "vox populi" technique (van Ginneken, 1998: 100) by quoting an unnamed local resident to say that China has "muted Hong Kong's freewheeling atmosphere."[3]

The *Washington Post* (July 1, 1998) argues that Hong Kong continues to reflect the fundamental incompatibility between western capitalism and Communist authoritarianism. Failing to see the conflict, the *Financial Times* (June 30, 1998) warns, would run the "risk of complacency." China's low profile in Hong Kong, according to the *New York Times* (July 1, 1998), only shows Beijing's "masterly public relations," because "even staunchly pro-Beijing people are not ready to predict that Hong Kong will never clash with China." On the same day, BBC News reports that Beijing's hands-off is "to persuade Taiwan to accept the same formula for reunification" and to attract hard currency investment through Hong Kong. When the PRC-installed provisional legislature expires, a record high 53 percent of the population turns up to cast their votes in the election for the regular legislature. The *People's Daily* (June 30, 1998) interprets the high voter turnout as a "full proof that people support and trust the Special Administrative Region (SAR) government." Western and Taiwan media view it as a sign of the public desire for more democracy.

Introducing New Criteria. Having found no overt suppression of liberty in Hong Kong, the foreign media develop new hypotheses from their old news paradigms by introducing new and potentially more stringent criteria to assess China's performance in Hong Kong. The criteria are no longer whether China will keep its hands off, but if Hong Kong tomorrow will "look like Hong Kong today" (as U.S. Secretary of State Albright states upon arriving in Hong Kong to attend the ceremony). The new criteria point to a full democracy and the formation of a Chinese identity among Hong Kong people.

While the PRC press rushes to celebrate the successful "one country, two systems" policy, other media scream: "Not yet!" The devil, according to the latter, lies ahead in the implementation of the Basic Law. The *Financial Times* (June 30, 1998) says that although Beijing has "so far" kept its promise of local autonomy, "democracy (in Hong Kong) faces tests." It quotes Martin Lee and Michael DeGolyer, an American teaching at a local university, to say that the SAR government has been ignoring public demand for more democracy and may build up resentment. Recapitulating its position expressed a year ago (see chapter 6), the *Wall Street Journal* (June 30, 1998) editorially urges that President Clinton, who is scheduled to be in Hong Kong after his visit to China, make a "more explicit defense of political freedom in Chinese history and culture." All western and Taiwan media prominently cover the president's meeting with Martin Lee and his calls for democracy.

New facts must be culled to "prove" new hypotheses. A *Financial Times* story (June 30, 1998) reports that one year after living under the Chinese rule, Hong Kong people have "no backlash against all things British" but remain "contemptuous" of the mainlanders and recent mainland immigrants. The contention is not new, but the formation of a Chinese identity has become a new benchmark for measuring the success of the handover. The *Washington Post*

(July 1, 1998) characterizes Hong Kong as a "schizophrenic city" locked in a fierce contest between two visions:

> The final outcome of these competing visions will have a great deal of influence on the future of Hong Kong as this outcropping of skyscrapers and trading houses seeks to navigate between its ambiguously Westernized shell and its ambivalent Chinese heart. At root, the fight is simple: Will Hong Kong be able to foster and maintain an identity that is fundamentally separate from that of China? Or will it shed the things that have made it less Chinese, slowly bonding with the ancient motherland, except with a better airport, more efficient port, and a telephone system that works?

In another story, the same paper (June 30, 1998) reports, "For many, love of the motherland is a forced one they do not really feel." The Chief Secretary, Anson Chan, is widely quoted as saying that "the real transition is about identity and not sovereignty," but she is also chided for expressing patriotic feelings when she sees the national flag on the National Day (see, for example, the *Daily Telegraph*, June 30, 1998).

The western media tend to interpret occurrences in view of their original news paradigms. Based on Beijing's overruling a Hong Kong court on a landmark immigration case and the U.S. Senate's decision to treat Hong Kong like the rest of China in exporting American technology with military applications, the *New York Times* (July 1, 1999) concludes that these events suggest that "the one country is rapidly subsuming the two systems," with Hong Kong taking on a "disquieting resemblance to its motherland." Similar concerns are echoed by some British newspapers. For instance, the *Financial Times* (July 1, 1999) sounds alarm over the deterioration of the rule of law, as reflected by the drop of public confidence in the Hong Kong government. Quoting Martin Lee, leader of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, the *Daily Telegraph* (June 28, 1999) says Beijing's ruling marked the "beginning of the rule of law in Hong Kong."

Repairing the News Paradigms

Compared with newspapers, TV coverage of Hong Kong during the year of the first anniversary is limited. CBS Evening News devotes no single item to Hong Kong's anniversary even though at that time the network is following President Clinton, who would be in Hong Kong after his visit to China. The network finally files a story about the president leaving Hong Kong for home, but makes no mention of the anniversary. Again, on July 5, 1998, CBS has another item about Hong Kong's new airport (which is inaugurated to mark the anniversary), again without saying a word about the occasion. We run a search

of Lexis-Nexis database for TV news transcripts, yielding two CNN stories on the anniversary (aired in CNN Today on July 1, 1998). They do not deviate from the U.S. print stories. Later that day, CNN Worldview airs a report by Andrea Koppel on Clinton's scheduled visit to Hong Kong and his scheduled meeting with Martin Lee and other democratic legislators. Both American networks' systematic, if not deliberate, inattention to the anniversary completely reverses the hyped TV hoopla presented a year ago.

In contrast, BBC News has continued to give extensive coverage to Hong Kong during the first year and to the anniversary itself. We search the BBC News archive online, yielding three long stories on the first anniversary on July 1, 1998. One of them depicts the change of Hong Kong's economy from "the biggest boom in history" to being "mired in recession." Another describes Hong Kong's "gloomy celebration." And the third explains why the previous expectations of Hong Kong all turn out to be wrong.

Hong Kong has gone through its first year after handover in what the finance secretary describes as "a roller-coaster ride" (quoted by the *Financial Times*, July 2, 1998). Locally, the *Ming Pao Daily News* (July 1, 1998) says that the year is filled with "nightmares and public resentment." Disputing the PRC's claims of "more prosperity," the populist *Apple Daily* (June 30, 1998) observes that the year has seen Hong Kong's wealth "evaporated." The SAR government seems also to have mismanaged a series of accidents: the bird flu, the poisonous red tide that seriously hurts the local fishing industry, the right to abode by mainland children born of a Hong Kong parent, the controversial rules for the first legislative election, and the chaos in the new airport. In some way, the tough year for Hong Kong might have helped to prevent Hong Kong from disappearing from the world media.

How does the foreign media cover the entire year in the wake of the handover? A search of Lexis-Nexis from July 6, 1997 to July 5, 1998 shows that Hong Kong continues to receive a fair amount of coverage by top U.S. and British newspapers[4] (Table 10.2). As part of the legacy of the previously staged "handover spectacle," they probably feel obliged to keep Hong Kong under constant surveillance. The *New York Times* (March 22, 1998), for example, quotes Martin Lee as saying that if nobody paid attention to Hong Kong, its freedoms would "erode away." In contrast to the print media's vigilance, TV shows little enthusiasm for Hong Kong. For the whole year, CBS News has only twenty-one stories about Hong Kong; all three political items are nothing but brief announcements read by Dan Rather.[5] Most prominently covered are the health scare caused by the bird's flu (nine stories) and the plunge of the stock market amidst the Asian financial crisis (eight stories).[6] Reliance on domestic authorities is obvious: four of the nine "health" stories refer to health officials from the United States or world health organizations, and two other stories quote domestic "health experts." Clearly, for reasons of high cost and

Table 10.2
Topical Distribution of U.S. and British Media Coverage of Hong Kong[1]
(July 6, 1997–July 5, 1998)

	Topical Categories				
Media	Politics (%)	Economy (%)	Health (%)	Other (%)	Total (n)
CBS Evening News	14	38	43	4	21
New York Times	47	35	15	4	101
Washington Post	36	30	30	4	92
Los Angeles Times	45	16	24	14	49
The Times	48	13	16	23	62
Daily Telegraph	47	16	19	18	79
Guardian	58	7	16	18	55

1. The figures are based on a Lexis-Nexis database search. The percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding error. "Politics" includes stories about court rulings, protests, changing election rules, the Provisional Legislation, individual rights, political structure, the right to abode, legislative elections, the Chief Executive's statements and policy address. "Economy" includes stories about the stock market, the property market, the changing economic structure and policies, various aspects of the economic activities. "Health" includes stories about the "bird's flu" and the "red tide."

obsession with good visuals, CBS has done a poor job at taking the undercurrent's pulse of *subtle, incremental*, and thus *less visible* structural changes in Hong Kong. For American television, catching the graphically eye-catching bad news is the name of the game. (Throughout the year, BBC News is much more attentive to Hong Kong, consistent with the British vow to monitor the former colony. From July 4 to July 9, 1998, it reports eight stories about the new airport, thanks partly to the attendance of Prime Minister Blair and Foreign Secretary Cook at the anniversary ceremony.)

In contrast to CBS's almost exclusive emphasis on Hong Kong's bad economy and health scare, top U.S. and British newspapers devote nearly a half of their coverage to its political development. Television turns away from the "nitty-gritty" items, such as those reported by the *Los Angeles Times*: a ruling by the Hong Kong Court of Appeals that dismisses the challenge to the Provisional Legislature (July 30, 1997), the passage of election law in the Provisional Legislature (September 13, 28, 30, 1997), the Chief Executive's policy address to the legislature (October 9, 1997), the controversy over "mother-tongue education" (March 9, 15, 1998), the first legislative election (May 23–29, 1998). U.S. television networks seem to have no memory of their manufactured hysteria just a year back. CBS has no bureau in Hong Kong; with its local bureau and more generous airtime, CNN fares only slightly better.

In Taiwan, the *China Times* gives Hong Kong comprehensive coverage throughout the year; it asks its correspondents and invited scholars and former officials to write about the implications of the "one country, two systems" scheme to Taiwan. Even though Hong Kong seems to experience "little change" politically after the handover, according to the paper (January 1 and 18), it has received "the heaven's curse" and run into so many bad situations. The paper covers Taiwan-related issues extensively: for example, a Taiwan delegate to the APEC summit rebuffed Chief Executive Tung who suggests that "one country, two systems" is applicable to Taiwan (November 24, 1997); and Hong Kong's ban on the display of Taiwan's flag on its National Day. Hong Kong media also pick up these stories but frame them on the basis of "the right to free expression." Before and after the first anniversary, the *China Times* publishes many column articles expressing concern that Taiwan may see its international space further shrunk by the Hong Kong example. It urges President Clinton not to praise the "one country, two systems" policy while in Hong Kong, for it is both "unnecessary and hurtful to Taiwan."

As expected, the PRC media cover Hong Kong prominently throughout the whole year. The *Guangzhou Daily*, a local paper in the capital of Guangdong province adjacent to Hong Kong, covers topics ranging from street crimes to Mr. and Mrs. Tung's celebration of the Chinese New Year with children. The paper reports that the Hong Kong SAR government is taking strong measures to boost its faltering economy, while completely ignoring local democrats in Hong Kong. In contrast, Hong Kong papers are highly critical of the SAR government's incompetence and declining credibility, while covering local democrats extensively.

As with their anniversary reports, the western press throughout the year also seeks to repair their news paradigms by resorting to the three approaches we have identified earlier. The *Los Angeles Times* (October 8, 1997) accuses the SAR government of "strip(ping) away the fledgling rights and democratic reforms enacted during the last days of British rule" even though there are "few signs of the market chaos, political repression or economic interference from Beijing." Edward Gargan of the *New York Times*, in summing up the first 100 days after handover on October 9, 1997, reports that even a pro-Beijing real estate tycoon "after some prodding, admitted that at least politically, the territory had regressed under Beijing's hand." On the same day, Keith Richburg of the *Washington Post* stresses the fact that Tung's first policy address "was almost devoid of any discussion of politics or civil liberties." On May 9, 1998, Farley of the *Los Angeles Times* reiterates her view: "Piece by piece, law by law, the elements that made Hong Kong independent and unique before its restoration to Chinese rule last July are being eroded." The embedded ideological framework enables the western press to see the first anniversary in the same vein.

In sum, we have been impressed with (a) the persistence of national prisms; (b) the continuing ideological contestation between the PRC media and all other media systems in the U.S.-led camp; (c) the media's reliance on domestic authorities to "repair" their news paradigms; and (d) U.S. television networks' retreat from Hong Kong compared with the relative vigilance of the U.S. and British newspapers. Surprise and bad news combined have managed to keep Hong Kong in the news. The media acknowledge the surprises before they quickly return to old paradigms to dismiss the significance of these surprises. The news paradigms, in the face of (un)comfortable evidence, are thus "repaired."

Notes

Chapter 1

1. We use "journalists" in a broad and generic sense. The majority of them are undoubtedly technical staff of television, including engineers, camera people, electricians, and producers. This total figure is based on applications made to the Government Information Services (GIS) of the Hong Kong government for media accreditation. How many of them did actually come is unknown, but even half of the 8,000 people would be considered very formidable.

2. The *New York Times* editorials had given Hong Kong sustained attention before 1997, but rarely commented on Hong Kong after the handover. In contrast, it has given substantially more prominent coverage to China in the late 1990s.

3. As the subject matters and themes call for, not all chapters involve the analysis of all national media systems. Chapter 5 is exclusively an analysis of the U.S. media, chapter 6 is primarily an analysis of the British media in comparison with the PRC media, while chapter 7 is an analysis of the media systems in three contending Chinese societies. Chapter 4 does not include Japan, but the general theoretical points still hold.

Chapter 2

1. In fact, eight years before 1997, some media in Europe already contacted Hongkong Telecom about renting satellites during the handover period. The Japanese media have also started to book satellite time a few years ago. As a result, Hongkong Telecom has spent U.S.$6.5 million to upgrade its facilities. Between June 15 and July 10, Hongkong Telecom rented out 5,000 hours of satellite time, which is about double the normal demand. It has a team of 300 people to serve the eight huge satellite dishes in its Stanley transmission station (*Apple Daily*, July 1).

Chapter 5

1. However, human rights abuses of similar magnitude committed by U.S. allies have been played down (Mahlasela, 1990; Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The reductive

themes of anti-Communism in the Tiananmen reports also missed many historical and sociological dimensions (Wasserstrom and Perry, 1994).

2. They are Edward Gargan (Hong Kong bureau chief and formerly, Beijing bureau chief), Seith Faison (Shanghai bureau chief), aided by Patrick Tyler (Beijing bureau chief), Nicholas Kristof (former Beijing and, in 1997, Tokyo bureau chief) and his wife, Sheryl WuDunn. Kristof and WuDunn won a Pulitzer Prize for their reports of the Tiananmen movement.

3. For the ten days before Rather arrived in Hong Kong, from June 15 to 24, CBS offered ten brief stories about the handover, all measured in seconds, including an announcement of his trip to Hong Kong. The 25 longer stories, from June 25 to June 1, were all measured in minutes. He also anchors a one-hour live special on the handover ceremony (June 30).

4. During the eight-day interval before Shaw's arrival (from June 15 to June 22), CNN's daily one-hour Worldview news program broadcasts only five stories related to Hong Kong's handover, but after his arrival it offered a total of 45 such stories (from June 23 to July 1).

5. Lee (2000a) argues, contrary to writers such as Tuchman (1978), that the media in Hong Kong use "strategic rituals" not so much to reify the established order, but to create journalistic space in a politically turbulent environment.

6. On July 6, 1997, CBS News analyst Laura Ingraham muses on the significance of Independence Day:

> This past week two countries celebrated their independence from British rule, but for two very different reasons. Where America honors liberty, China crushes it. Hong Kong, once one of Asia's freest cities, is now under the control of the one of the world's most repressive regimes. So many of the images of the transfer last week were of smiles and dancing and parties . . . The mobs celebrating in Tiananmen Square might lull us into believing that the clampdown of '89 was an aberration. China should serve as a constant, haunting reminder to us that the cause of liberty has not yet triumphed.

She continues to argue that while big business is making big money in China, American foreign policy makers should not be blind to "all that China has done to its own people, and maybe later to the people of Hong Kong."

Chapter 6

1. In the 1964 World Youth Forum, Moscow deliberately included Hong Kong and Macau in a resolution on the elimination of colonies in Asia. China accused the Soviets of "interfering in the internal affairs" and reiterated its intention of recovering Hong Kong and Macau "at an appropriate time." To a similar charge made in early 1963 by the U.S. Communist Party, the *People's Daily* claimed in a sharply worded editorial that the PRC could not be held accountable for an issue left over by unequal treaties signed between the Qing dynasty and the British imperialists (Lane, 1990).

Chapter 7

1. Jinghai Temple is where the negotiation for the Nanjing Treaty took place in the summer of 1842. In 1989, on the site of the old temple, a museum was built to display the historical archives related to the first Opium War and the Nanjing Treaty.

2. Among these cities are Shanghai (the CCP's birthplace), Nanjing (where the treaty of ceding Hong Kong was signed), Guangzhou (the capital of Guangdong province adjacent to Hong Kong), Shenzhen (a special economic zone next to Hong Kong), and Dongguan (a small city along the Hong Kong border where burning of British opium triggered a war that lost Hong Kong).

3. The *Oriental Daily News* has bought eight time-sharing digital cameras particularly for the occasion, each costing over US$26,000. Other local newspapers also invest heavily to buy professional-grade digital cameras and portable computers so that their reporters can send pictures back to the organizations as soon as possible. The Kodak Company in Hong Kong reveals that in May sales figures of digital cameras jump five times compared with the same time period in previous year.

4. Just before July 1, TVB airs 90 hours of nonstop handover programs via microwave channels and the outside broadcast (OB) facilities. The fiber optics alone cost more than US$100,000 for two days' use.

5 The Hong Kong branch of Xinhua News Agency has, until 1999, been China's command post; its news function was only of secondary importance. See Chan and Lee (1991) for an analysis of its role in media management. The political arm of Xinhua News Agency has been renamed the Liaison Office of the Central Government in Hong Kong. Xinhua is a news operater now.

Chapter 8

1. The biggest newspaper chain in Canada has bought *Sing Tao's* Canadian editions. Each year Hong Kong's TVB hosts a major charity in Toronto or Vancouver and broadcasts the program for Hong Kong audiences. In the past few years, the winners of Miss Hong Kong are residents from Vancouver.

2. The Canadian Commission (renamed Canadian Consulate after 1997) is one of the largest federal government offices abroad, headed by a commissioner with an ambassadorial rank. Many provinces have established their own offices in Hong Kong to handle immigration, trade, and tourism. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong—the largest branch outside of China—has published a bimonthly magazine *Canada Hong Kong Business* since 1988. The nonprofit Canada China Business Council launched another bimonthly business magazine, the *Canada China Business Forum*, in 1992.

3. Many Hong Kong celebrities and billionaires are citizens of Canada, where Li Ka-shing, Hong Kong's richest man, has major business investments (Husky Oil and others). Ethnic Chinese have gained increasing visibility in Canada's political life,

counting the Governor-General of Canada (Adrienne Clarkson), the former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia (David Lam), and a current Secretary for Asia-Pacific Affairs (Raymond Chan) among them. The Hong Kong Bank of Canada, wholly owned by HSBC Holdings in Hong Kong, is the largest foreign bank in Canada with over 100 branches from coast to coast.

4. He does not forget to remind the readers of Hong Kong's success as measured by its being the world's seventh-largest trading economy, fourth-largest stock market, largest exporter of clocks, calculators, imitation jewelry, and radios. Hong Kong also has the world's tallest outdoor seated bronze statue of Buddha, the world's largest road and rail suspension bridge, the world's highest rate of horse-race betting, the world's highest consumption of Cognac, and five of the world's busiest McDonald's restaurants. (Marcus Gee, "Brash, Booming Hong Kong," The *Globe and Mail*, June 25, p. A23)

5. Australia reversed its notorious "White Australia" policy in the 1960s. By 1991, 51% of the migration intake was drawn from Asian nations, and 4.1% of the Australian population had been born in Asia. Multiculturalism has replaced assimilation and integration as a keystone of ethnic policy. The policy of enmeshment with Asia has gradually reduced the influence of European stereotypes.

6. In 1997, about 350 Australian companies maintain offices in Hong Kong and a further 1,000 companies are estimated to have regional offices in the territory. The Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, established in 1986, is the second largest of its kind in Hong Kong and is Australia's largest business association overseas, with 1,200 members. For many years, Australia has enjoyed a significant trade surplus with Hong Kong. The Hong Kong immigrants in Australia bring investments that benefit the real estate market and finance sector (Taneja, 1994). Hong Kong has been Australia's largest education market in terms of financial return. In 1996, more than 12,000 Hong Kong students were enrolled in Australian schools, which amounted to about 10 percent of all students studying in Australia. While Hong Kong was Australia's ninth largest source of visitors in 1995, Australia was Hong Kong's sixth largest sources of visitors in the same year. Also, Hong Kong was the sixth largest destination for Australian overseas investment, while Hong Kong was the fourth largest source of foreign investment in Australia (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade, 1997).

7. A survey conducted by the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong in 1994 indicated that 82% of the Australian business people intended to remain in Hong Kong after the handover. Another survey by the AustCham also found that over 90% of respondents said they were confident that they would be active in Hong Kong after 2000 (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade, 1997).

8. Hong Kong people rank second in having taken advantage of Australia's more lax immigration laws since 1982. Canada requires immigrants to have at least three years of continuous residency to develop commitment and loyalty before they can apply for citizenship. Australia only requires two years of cumulative (not necessarily continuous) stay; hence many return to live in Hong Kong. Political representation of Chinese in Australia is insignificant, as is Hong Kong's media involvement there.

9. Japan's investment in Hong Kong in 1999 increased by 40.5% over the previous year.

Chapter 9

1. Some writers have pointed out that these three categories of "ceremonial politics" may not be inclusive of "disaster marathons" (Liebes, 1998) or "political rituals of shame, degradation, and excommunication" (Carey, 1998). Thompson (1995) distinguishes "media events" from the media genre of "receipt address," mediated everyday activity, and fictionalized action. Scannell (1995), in a generally sympathetic view, criticizes Dayan and Katz for a lack of historical depth in their analysis. He also questions whether different events—ranging from the moon landings and the British royal wedding to President Sadat's journey to Jerusalem and President Kennedy's assassination—are of the same order.

2. Scannell (1995) notes that historically television has been associated with the slow erosion of autocratic authority and the decay of charisma.

Epilogue

1. Unless otherwise noted, all the dates in this epilogue refer to 1998.

2. For the media outlets that have multiple anniversary pieces, only the most important piece, based on the location and the size of headline, is included in the table.

3. "Communist Hong Kong has its first birthday."

4. On the U.S. side, there are 101 items on the *New York Times* (Foreign and Editorial Desks), 49 items on the *Los Angeles Times* (Foreign and Editorial Desks), 92 items on the *Washington Post* (A Section and Op-Ed Sections). On the British side, there are also 62 items on the *Times* of London (Overseas News Section), 55 items on the *Guardian* (Foreign and Editor Pages), and 79 items on the *Daily Telegraph* (International Section). This search does not include stories published in the financial, fashion, style, and entertainment pages.

5. These three stories report that Hong Kong police allow a peaceful demonstration (July 22, 1997), Hong Kong celebrates the first Chinese National Day after the handover (October 1, 1997), and Hong Kong is holding its first legislative election (May 24, 1998).

6. The series on the bird's flu starts with the first death attributed to "influenza A" and ends with the slaughter of all chickens in Hong Kong. In between, there are officials from the World Health Organization explaining how "the Hong Kong flu" might be transmitted, and U.S. experts from the Center for Disease Control "rushing to create a vaccine for the Hong Kong flu virus."

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