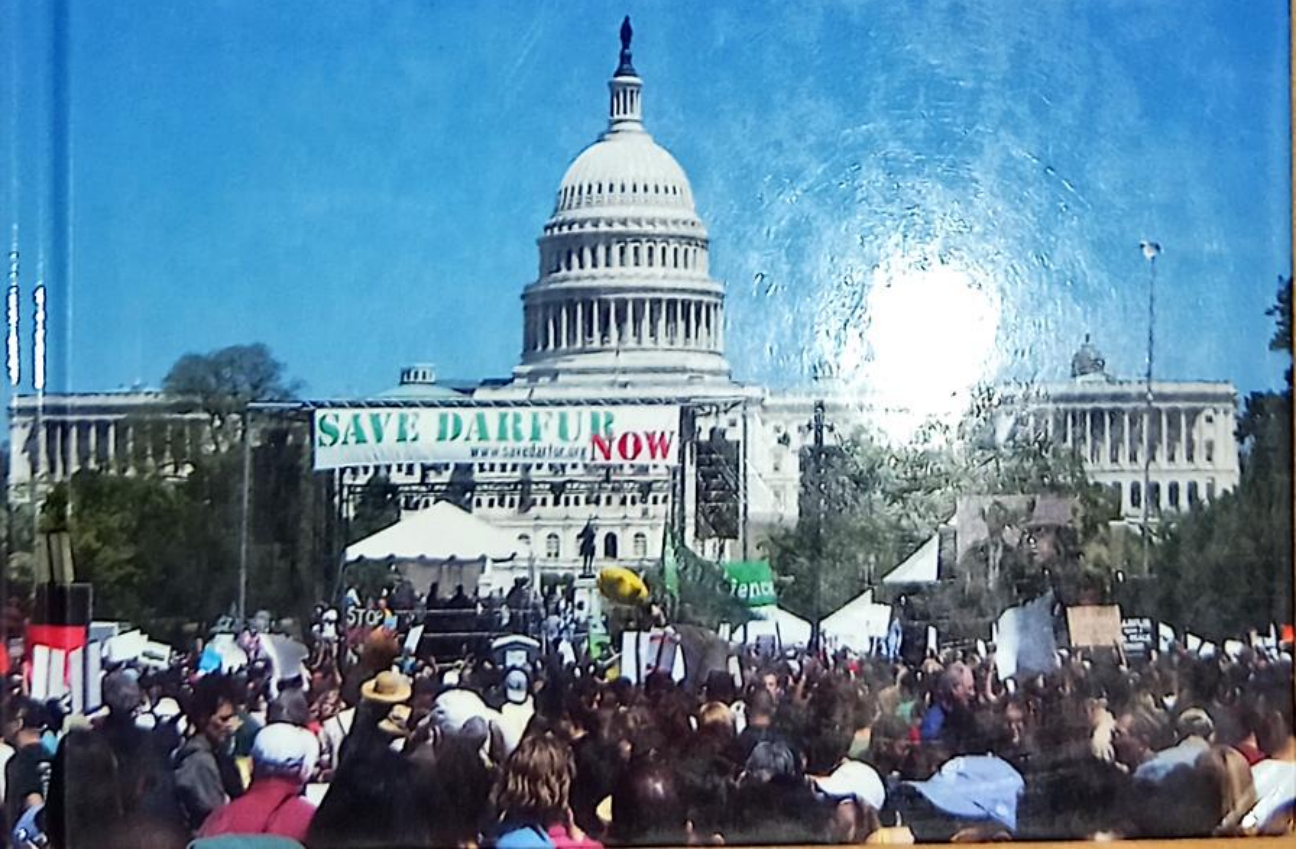
Mass Media and Political Issues

Alexandra Prentiss



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Mass Media and Political Issues

The relationship between politics and mass media has existed since the inception of the notion of state. It is a complex, often fraught, relationship, in which audiences, discursive actors, and agendas shift frequently. Mass media provides a dual function when it comes to political issues. Some articles featured in this book will deal with the traditional relationships between politics and mass media, including propaganda, expose, and hegemony. Traditional top down media, such as newspapers and television broadcasts, inform the populace of what is occurring in politics; the newer forms of citizen-generated platforms, such as social media, can also inform the politicians of their constituents' concerns. Here, we will be examining these dual roles: how the media shape citizens' attitudes and behaviors in relation to politics, and also how citizens are in turn able to influence the political process in new, and sometimes revolutionary, ways. Different aspects of the interplay between audience and politics, including agenda setting, and targeting demographics will be highlighted in several case studies. No consideration of the relationship between politics and mass media is complete without a discussion of the use of mass media as propaganda, or a tool of manipulation, by politicians, as "Mass media's manipulative potential in political discourse" will illuminate. The use of the Internet and mass media for propagation of ideas and propaganda is not limited to intra-national contexts, but is also relevant on the geopolitical level, as "Information warfare technologies in political discourse" shows. Nations have their own agendas on the world stage, even when it comes to seemingly non-political events like the Olympics, which will be investigated in "The Interference of Politics in the Olympic Games, and How the US Media Contribute to It." New media enables new ways of agenda-setting, as discourse analysis reveals in "Internet Aggregators Constructing the Political Right Wing in Japan." The misrepresentation of distant events can have a direct effect on how audiences perceive those events, and thus on how policy is shaped, as evidenced by "Misrepresentation of the Bosnian War by Western media." Nowhere has mass media been more instrumental in shaping public opinion than in cases of political corruption. The relationship between news coverage and political corruption in Western democracies will be considered in the article, "Journalistic coverage of political and financial crises and the "issue" of political corruption." On the flip side of the exposure of political corruption by objective news sources is the role of state-owned media in promoting the political elite's agenda, as discussed in "Reshaping the Hegemony: State-Owned Media in Egypt after the Revolution." Is social media a legitimate sphere for public discourse? Several of the articles in this book will parse this question. In keeping with the objective of looking at the interplay between politics and mass media, case studies will demonstrate how social media has affected how politicians disseminate information, as well as how citizens discuss politics and interact with government. To provide perspectives on how politicians communicate with constituents, several recent elections in different countries will be discussed. "Negotiating the Political Self on Social Media Platforms: An In-Depth Study of Image-Management in an Election-Campaign in a Multi-Party Democracy" looks at a Swedish parliamentarian's use of social media in the 2010 elections, in conjunction with a communications agency, examines how was she able to monitor her self-presentation via this new conduit. In interviews with a number of European Union parliamentary assistants, "Politician 2.0: Information Behavior and Dissemination on Social Networking Sites-Gaps and Best-Practices" delves into how and why politicians use social media to present information and monitor their profiles. "Political Communication in Malaysia: A Study on the Use of New Media in Politics" addresses a completely different type of government, in which one political party has been in power for almost 60 years; social media has been found to have broadened citizen participation in Malaysian politics and to have even begun to challenge the status quo. "A Trigger or a Muffler?-Examining the Dynamics of Crosscutting Exposure and Political Expression in Online Social Media" is South Korean investigation into the 2012 presidential elections analyzes whether social media is a place where political conversations between citizens are sparked, or whether it muffles their voices by narrowing the scope of their political views. The Middle East, traditionally a public sphere that severely curtailed political discourse, social media has fundamentally changed the ways in which citizens communicate about political events like social uprisings, including the 2009 Iranian protests, which will be examined in "Social Media and Citizen Journalism in the 2009 Iranian Protests: The Case of Neda Agha-Soltan." It is important to consider both traditional news sources as well as newer ones as channels via which politics are presented. This book includes a study comparing how the influence of a political campaign differs between online news and social networking sites, in "Political campaigning 2.0." The interagency between active and passive audiences as new discursive actors appear in the public sphere as a result of new and emergent technologies is discussed in "The Extended Space of Public Opinion in the Context of Multi-Platform Journalism: From Speakers to Discursive Actors," which examines how public opinion of the current Israel/Palestine conflict is shaped. Some traditional news sources are leveraging new forms of media facilitated by the Internet to increase what was previously a wane in civic engagement in politics, including low voter turnout, as "E-democracy remixed: Learning from the BBC's Action Network and the shift from a static commons to a participatory multiplex" demonstrates. Politics are necessarily targeted to certain demographics; media seeking to reach these demographics target certain audiences. One might think of news as a primary source of political information; however, other traditional media also warrant examination. For example, "Fair Lady: effective coverage of politics in a women's magazine" presents a study of Fair Lady, a South African magazine targeting women, whose pages are not traditionally associated with political coverage, revealed how it was able to shape its audience politically. An interesting result of globalization, increased migration, and augmented flow of information has been in how foreign nationals perceive homeland politics via online news sources. The case of Nigerians living in Malaysia will be discussed in "Exploring the agenda-setting potential of homeland online newspapers on perceptions of elections issues among diasporic Nigerians in Malaysia." Finally, with the proliferation of entertainment-based media, there has been increased interest in the intersection between politicians' private and public lives, especially via televised programs, as evidenced by the article, "Politics Backstage-Television Documentaries, Politics and Politicians." This has become an important way for politicians to monitor their self-presentation to the public.

A native of Rhode Island, in the U.S., Alexandra obtained her Bachelor's degree in History from Johns Hopkins University and her Master's in Media and Communications from the London School of Economics. Her Master's dissertation examined blogs through the lens of psychoanalysis. Alexandra has worked internationally in Prague, Marseille, Tel Aviv, New York and Seattle in various communications and marketing positions in industries such as consumer goods, technology and event planning. Her interests lie in editing and corporate content development.

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