

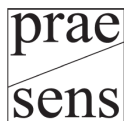
Media Systems and Political Systems in East Asia: A Comparative Analysis of China, Japan, and South Korea

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Abstract

Media systems depend strongly on their political, economic, and legal environments. However, it is increasingly argued that media systems will assimilate in the course of globalisation, making a comparison based on nation-states redundant (Blum 2005: 5). Comparisons of European media systems showed that media systems develop similarly in the same regions (Hallin and Mancini 2004). On the basis of a comparison between Japan, South Korea, and the People's Republic of China, this paper deals with the question whether this also applies to the region of East Asia. Due to the strong dependence of East Asia's media systems on their political environment, a nation-state based comparison is still reasonable in this region. Roger Blum's 'extended comparison approach' is used as a theoretical and methodological foundation for this research. This approach allows establishing a connection between political systems and media systems. It will be shown that the media systems of China, Japan, and South Korea are first and foremost dependent on the political framework within which they operate. Regional similarities exist despite different political systems, but they do so mainly on the surface. On closer examination differences prevail.

Keywords: media system, political system, East Asia



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Introduction

Media systems depend strongly on their political, economic, and legal environments in every part of the world—different states bring out different media systems. Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm showed this connection for the first time in *Four Theories of the Press* (1956), albeit in a very normative way. Since then media and political scientists have been trying to analyse media systems of various states and their dependence on the political systems within which they operate in a comparative perspective. In the course of dealing with media systems analytically, it is more and more often argued that a comparative approach based on nation-states is no longer useful, since media systems assimilate in the course of globalisation and will sooner or later develop into one world media system (Blum 2005: 5). In 2004, Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini in their work *Comparing Media Systems* found that particularly the media systems of Western democracies exhibit many similarities in their regional development. Since media systems are strongly embedded in their social, economic, and political environment (Thomaß 2007: 7), this paper uses a comparative approach to analyse three East Asian nations and to find out if these nations' media systems show regional similarities despite their different political systems.

The media systems of the three East Asian states of the People's Republic of China (PRC, China), Japan, and South Korea will be analysed. This means that an authoritarian state will be compared to two democratic systems, although it should be noted that South Korea was ruled by authoritarian regimes until 1987. I will proceed from the assumption that it is first and foremost the political system of nation-states that shapes media systems and that the nations to be compared developed strongly distinct media systems.¹

I will use categories developed in 2005 by Swiss media scientist Roger Blum. In his 'extended comparison approach', he uses political and media dimensions, stating that every state in the world can be classified using this model.

In the first part of this paper, I will shortly deal with the material and method used to answer the research question posed here. Thereafter, I will outline the nine categories used to compare the media systems of the PRC, Japan, and South Korea and their connection to the political systems within which they operate. I will then sketch the main characteristics of the media in the three East Asian nations. Afterwards, I will apply Blum's categories to each nation. In the final conclusion, I will outline the differences and similarities of the compared nations.

1 When analysing the media landscapes of China, Japan, and South Korea, I will concentrate on 'typical' mass media: the press and broadcasting. As the Internet does not count as a classical mass medium (Strohmeier 2004: 45-46), it will not be included in this analysis. The framework of analysis is further narrowed—in the case of China—by leaving out Hong Kong's media outlets, which do not operate under PRC law.

Material and methods

In order to answer the research question posed in the introduction, I will make a scientific-methodical comparison of multiple states based on a comprehensive analysis of relevant literature. For this purpose, mostly German and English textbooks, as well as country-, media- and politics-specific monographs, are used, supplemented by articles and papers of specialist journals.

Hans J. Kleinsteuber states that in the area of media studies phenomena can be compared only when a trans-boundary quality exists, and there is a sufficient basis for comparison. Nevertheless, media systems are products of state decisions (Kleinsteuber 2002: 26, 31), wherefore the media systems within single state borders are used as a starting point for analysis. The complexity of a comparison between various states inevitably requires limiting selected categories, which will be introduced in the next chapter. The comparison will be made on the macro-level, which allows for the analysis of groups, structures, systems, processes, and interactions (Thomaß 2007: 30).

Dimensions of comparison

Since the 1950s, media scientists have been trying to show the connection between media and politics using models (Blum 2005: 5). Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm were the first ones to develop models for four different media systems: they distinguished between authoritarian, liberal, social-responsible, and soviet-communist systems (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm 1956; Blum 2005: 5). They illustrated that media systems can be distinguished by their relationship to the political system, the control the state poses over the media, and their property situation (Blum 2005: 5). Their approach has often been criticised for being strongly normative and shaped by Western pluralist standards (Weischenberg 1992: 86). The 1980s brought forth more models for international comparisons of media systems. Today, most of them are considered to be too schematic. In 1975 and 1995 Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch linked political and media categories of comparison, trying to make the connection between media and politics measurable for the first time (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995; Blum 2005: 6).

Hallin and Mancini also combined political and media criteria to create an approach for comparing the media systems of Western democracies in 2004. They developed three regional models (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 67; Blum 2005: 6) and showed that media systems develop in the same way within each respective region, because they are based on related mentalities and cultures and influence each other across borders (Blum 2005: 6). Since this concept was developed for Western democratic systems it cannot be applied to other regions of the world without prob-

lems; but it serves as one basis for Blum's approach. Blum connects some dimensions used by Hallin and Mancini (2004) with categories developed in 2001 at the University of Bern (Blum 2005: 9). The resulting approach aims to create the connection between political and media systems and to make an international comparison possible. The following table shows the nine categories of comparison:

Table 1 The extended comparison approach

Dimension	A: Liberal line	B: Middle line	C: Regulated line
1 Political system	democratic	authoritarian	totalitarian
2 Political culture	polarised	ambivalent	concordant
3 Freedom of media	ban of censorship	occasional censorship	permanent censorship
4 Ownership of media	private	private and public	public
5 Funding of media	market	market and state	state
6 Political parallelism	weak	medium	strong
7 State control	weak	medium	strong
8 Media culture	investigative	ambivalent	concordant
9 Media orientation	commercial	divergent	public service

Source: Blum 2005: 9

1. Political system: In this category three rough lines can be distinguished: democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian political systems. In order to be classified as a democracy, the following aspects have to be associated with the nation: free and fair elections, active and passive electoral rights, political competition, division of powers, freedom of association, freedom of speech, and freedom of information (Ritter 2008: 33). These aspects are not found in authoritarian and totalitarian systems. Still, in authoritarian systems political pluralism exists to some degree. In contrast to totalitarian systems, there is no exclusive ideology, no extensive political mobilisation, and a minimum of political participation (Heberer and Derichs 2008: 3).
2. Political culture: This dimension was called into play by Hallin and Mancini. A nation's political culture can be polarised, ambivalent, or concordant. Regarding this, Hallin and Mancini speak of moderate and polarised

pluralism: polarised pluralism manifests itself in partial consent, questioning of the political system, and ideological differences; there are strong anti-system parties (2004: 59-60) and frequent political conflicts that lead to regime-changes (ibid.: 61). When nations show strong polarised pluralism, the political culture often also follows the polarised line. Systems with moderate pluralism show tendencies towards one common centre. The ideological differences between political players are unincisive; the basic political order is mostly accepted (ibid.: 60). In these systems the political culture tends to be concordant.

3. Freedom of media: This dimension deals with the question of whether or not censorship is allowed and implemented. Blum distinguishes between a ban of censorship, occasional censorship, and permanent censorship, the latter meaning in this case meaning pre-censorship, where media content is censored before publication by responsible organs (Tönnies n.d.). Frequently, political authorities conduct this control; sometimes there are separate control organs 'switched' between politics and media (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 64). Voluntary self-censorship by journalists themselves is another form of pre-censorship (Thorgeirsdottir 2004: 384). Other measures of censorship include censorship commissions, indexes of forbidden books, compulsory imprints, constraints on job-approvals for journalists, restraints of transportation, selling and buying of print media, media taxes, and licensing (Delhaes 2002: 49).
4. Ownership of media: According to Blum, media can be privately or publicly owned; within one media system there can also be mixed forms of ownership. Concerning the ownership of media, Heinz Pürer distinguishes between three different forms of organisation (2003: 228): private or commercial media, and public service media, the former functioning like other commercial businesses (ibid.: 415), the latter being constituted—but not controlled—by the state (ibid.: 229). The third form, state-owned media, is constituted, (partly) financed, and controlled by the state. Functionaries are appointed by the government or a responsible ministry. In dictatorships, state-owned media are part of the power-concentration and dependent on executive bodies; they serve as instruments of leadership; news are centrally regulated; education and approval of journalists are controlled by the state, which also directly or indirectly finances the media; frequently the public post has a monopoly on transportation of print media; media businesses have to obtain licenses before being allowed to operate; and the state partly uses the media to pursue changes of social circumstances (ibid.: 420-421).

5. Funding of media: The media can be financed in three ways: through the market, the state, or both of them (Blum 2005: 8). Media financed by the market generate their income by selling their product to the audience or through advertising (Pürer 2003: 228), whereas state-financed media are funded from the national budget or public money. Broadcast license fees also fall in this category.
6. Political parallelism: Political parallelism is another dimension mentioned by Hallin and Mancini, but it was also discussed by Blumler and Gurevitch in 1995 in *The Crisis of Public Communication*. According to Blum it can be strong, medium, or weak. Political parallelism refers to the way in which the media system reflects the most important political divisions of society; it refers to the relationship of media and political parties (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 21). In order to determine how strongly developed the political parallelism is, Hallin and Mancini use five indicators: (1) political orientation of media content; (2) organisational connections between media and political organisations; (3) tendency of media personnel to be active in politics; (4) partisanship of media audience; and (5) journalistic role orientations and practices (ibid: 28-29). Blumler and Gurevitch define five stages of political parallelism ranging from strong to weak (1995: 65): it is strongest when political parties are directly related to media businesses or rely on the loyalty of some media. If news media support certain political parties but in some cases also positively highlight other parties, the political parallelism follows the middle line. An even weaker form is what the authors call 'ad hoc political parallelism': here news media decide from case to case which party to support. If media do not strengthen any political party and want to keep their neutrality by all means, then there is no political parallelism. Another indicator for political parallelism is—according to Hallin and Mancini—the concept of external and internal pluralism (2004: 29-30). External pluralism is reflected on the level of the media system as a whole. There are many different media outlets, each of which reflects other social perceptions. In such systems, the political parallelism is strong. Internal pluralism is reached within one single medium, trying to provide neutral and balanced views. Here, the political parallelism is rather weak.
7. State control over media: State control is another dimension brought into play by Hallin and Mancini. They understand this category as being the degree and way of direct state intervention in the media system (ibid.: 21). The degree of state control is high when the state owns, finances, and censors media. It is also higher the more laws and regulations exist to govern the media sector, including defamation laws, privacy protection laws, regu-

lations that limit the access to government information, laws that regulate concentration, ownership or competition of media and political communication, or laws concerning broadcast licenses and content, including regulations for political pluralism, language, and content (ibid.: 43-44). Another possibility for the state to control the media is via control over media personnel through education, political indoctrination, or by simply appointing the candidates considered most eligible (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 63).

8. Media culture: According to Blum, a country's media culture is directly related to its political culture (2006: 11). It can be investigative, ambivalent, or concordant. In an investigative media culture the media insist on their critical and control function (ibid.: 16) and serve as 'watchdogs' of society, supervising political players and criticising them if necessary (Strohmeier 2004: 73). In a system with concordant media culture this function takes a back seat—media voluntarily or involuntarily support the political system by representing the interests of political or economical players; political institutions are respected, not criticised; and media content is often partisan (Blum 2006: 16).
9. Media orientation: Media can act commercially or act upon their public service responsibility (Blum 2005: 8). Commercial orientation means that the media act like other private businesses. They find themselves in economic competition and seek to increase their profit and market shares. They produce content according to commercial criteria and engage in market and audience research. Their social responsibility is comparatively unimportant; profit is more relevant than journalistic quality (Meier and Jarren 2002: 202-210). On the contrary, media that are public service oriented do not emphasise profit and market share. They consider themselves socially responsible and perform functions for the government, the state, or the population (Weischenberg 1992: 175). Journalistic goals and media functions are central (Meier and Jarren 2002: 203). If the media orient themselves equally to commerce and service to the public, we can speak of divergent media orientation (Blum 2005: 8).

Media in East Asia

The three nations to be compared in this paper all have saturated media landscapes. In Japan, about 120 newspapers are published, one third of which have a morning and an evening edition. The largest national daily newspapers, *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞 (Yomiuri News), *Asahi Shimbun* 朝日新聞 (Asahi News), *Mainichi Shim-*

bun 毎日新聞 (Mainichi News), and *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* 日本経済新聞 (Nihon Keizai News), each sell more than four million issues every day—considerably more than Europe’s and the United States’ high-circulation papers (Legewie 2010: 2). The fifth large daily newspaper is the *Sankei Shimbun* 産経新聞 (Sankei News). Of all the newspapers printed in Japan, the national newspapers have a share of 53 percent, the local and regional newspapers represent 37 percent, and the sports newspapers have a share of ten percent (Foreign Press Center [FPC] 2004: 25).

The public broadcaster Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai 日本放送協会 (Japan Broadcasting Corporation; NHK) plays an equally important role in the Japanese media system as the large newspapers. There are also many private radio and television (TV) stations, most of them owned by the important national daily newspapers (Hediger 2007: 303). An important element of the Japanese media system is the press club system. In Japan, there are about 800 press clubs, which are part of major institutions like the parliament, ministries, national and regional government offices, public agencies, or industrial associations (Legewie 2010: 5). Not all media are included in the press clubs: weekly and monthly magazines, special interest newspapers, many commercial broadcasters, foreign news media, freelance journalists, and online media are excluded (ibid.: 6).

The South Korean media developed under the strict guidance of the state (Park, Kim, and Sohn 2000: 120). The number of Korean print and broadcast media grew rapidly since 1987 (Youm 1998: 186; Sung 2004: 107). Three national newspapers dominate the Korean press landscape: *Chosŏn Ilbo* 조선일보 (Korea Daily), *Tong-a Ilbo* 동아일보 (East Asia Daily), and *Chungang Ilbo* 중앙일보 (Chungang Daily) (Han 2005: 1). They are family owned and are together responsible for 70 percent of South Korea’s newspaper circulation (Kwak 2012: 54). Each of the large newspapers has a circulation of 1.4 to 3.5 million issues. In the area of broadcasting, the public stations Hanguk Pangsong Kongsŏ 한국 방송 공사 (Korea Broadcasting Station [KBS]) and Munhwa Pangsong Chusikhoesa 문화방송주식회사 (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation [MBC]), are most important to mention (Croissant 2008: 334). As is the case in Japan, South Korea also has a dual broadcasting system with public and private stations existing next to each other, whereby South Korea’s private and public stations are very similar in broadcasting content (Kwak 2012: 99). The South Korean media system also was for a long time characterised by press clubs following the Japanese example. By now the clubs have been dissolved (Kwak 2012: 67).²

2 The dissolving of the press club system began in 2003 after the election of President No Mu-hyŏn 노무현 (Roh Moo-hyun), who had the broad support of non-traditional, often Internet-based media outlets. The goal of disestablishing the press clubs was to put all the media on equal footing; it also probably helped Roh Moo-hyun, who did not have the political support of the mainstream media that were in the press clubs (New York Times 2004).

The Chinese media sector grew by 100 percent between 1978 and 2008 (Stockmann 2010: 108). The PRC's media system is characterised by the simultaneous existence of rapid commercialisation and ongoing ideological control (Ma 2000: 21). The state control of media is still omnipresent, but the media are gaining more freedom when it comes to non-political news coverage (ibid.: 22). In 2003, there were more than 2,000 newspapers and more than 9,000 magazines published in China (Yin 2006: 29). On top of the hierarchy of the Chinese media landscape stands the *Rénmín Ribào* 人民日报 (People's Daily), which—together with the public news agency *Xīnhuá tōngxùnshè* 新华通讯社 (New China News Agency, abbreviated as '*Xinhua*'), *Zhōngyāng Rénmín Guǎngbō Diàntái* 中央人民广播电台 (China National Radio Station [CNR]), and *Zhōngguó Zhōngyāng Diànshìtái* 中国中央电视台 (China Central Television Station [CCTV])—acts as a mouthpiece for the *Zhōngguó Gòngchǎndǎng* 中国共产党 (Chinese Communist Party [CCP]) and sets examples for other media outlets. For example, these other media outlets often publish content only after it is first released by one of the leading media (Zhao 1998: 18). Each province, city, or prefecture has one party newspaper, one radio station, and one TV station, which are directly controlled by provincial or local authorities (ibid.). Besides these official media, there are also several market-oriented magazines that play an important role in the course of diversification of the Chinese media landscape; although commercially oriented, these media are also published by governmental organisations (ibid.: 132).

TV and radio—being the most popular source of news among the Chinese population—play an equally important role in the Chinese media landscape. In 2004 there were more than 374 TV stations in China, CCTV being the biggest and most influential (Abels 2006: 103).

Now that I have briefly introduced the main facts of the East Asian media landscapes, I will proceed to examine in detail the connection of media and politics using Blum's model in the next section.

Media and politics in East Asia

Political system

Japan's official form of government is that of a parliamentary democracy (Hasegawa 1998: 284). The political system is composed of three independent branches: the legislative power, the judiciary, and the executive branch (Derichs and Lukner 2008: 212). The Japanese people—meaning men and women older than 20—vote for the members of parliament (ibid.: 211-212). In order to obtain passive electoral rights one has to be at least 25 years of age (Free Choice Foundation 2007: 9). Universal

franchise is constitutionally guaranteed as well as an equal and secret ballot (ibid.: 1). After the election in 2012 there were six major political parties competing for votes (*Financial Times* 2012). Freedom of association manifests itself in various workers' and employers' representatives in the form of labour unions or entrepreneurs' associations (Derichs and Lukner 2008: 265). Together with the right to free speech, this aspect is guaranteed under the Japanese constitution (FPC 2004: 97). Since 2004 the right to free access to public information is also guaranteed by law (Mendel 2008: 69). Hence, Japan meets all the criteria of a democracy and follows line A in Blum's model, displayed in Table 1.

The same is true for South Korea, even though it still counts as a new democracy and is often described as a 'defective' democracy (Köllner 2005: 68). The first democratic presidential elections took place in 1987 (Kim and Kwon 2009: 177). Before that, South Korea was ruled by authoritarian regimes (Kwak 2012: 2). Today, the official form of government is a presidential republic (Croissant 2008: 301), where the president is quite powerful, being in charge of appointing the prime minister and being authorised to implement and decline new laws (Köllner 2005: 63). The South Korean people directly vote for the president and the members of parliament, an equal and secret ballot is guaranteed, as is the case in Japan (Croissant 2008: 297, 299). The constitution also guarantees active and passive electoral rights (ibid.: 296). During the elections in 2012, there were nine political parties competing with each other (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung 2012). The legislative power, the judiciary, and the executive branch are independent (Croissant 2008: 297). Since 1987, there are more and more labour unions; interest groups are allowed to unite (Kern 2005: 182)—thus, South Koreans have freedom of association and coalition. The right to freedom of expression and information is written down in the South Korean Constitution (Croissant 2008: 296), though the implementation of these rights is problematic, as will be shown later. Although South Korea does not yet count as a liberal democracy like Japan, it meets all the criteria of a democracy and therefore also falls in line A of Blum's model.

The PRC is a one-party state in which the CCP has a monopoly of power—there is no political competition (Abels 2006: 81) apart from competition within the party. Elections are only held on local levels, whereby candidates are appointed by the higher-ranking party organs (Heberer 2008: 85). There are no equal and fair elections and not everyone enjoys passive electoral rights. Freedom of speech and information are included in the Constitution; however, there are major constraints on these rights (Abels 2006: 117). There is no division of powers; in fact, the CCP controls the government, the media, and the legal system (Heilmann 2008: 575; He 2009: 60). At the same time, ideology is not central to the CCP anymore, which has realised that the communist ideology is not compatible with economic reforms (Abels 2006: 58). On the Third Plenum of the 18th CCP Central Committee, which took place in November 2013, the Party went even further: deepening reform not

only of China's governance, but also of the economy, were central themes—reforms towards more political participation and the 'perfection of market economy systems', while at the same time 'persisting in the leadership of the Party', were core issues (Chennai Centre for China Studies 2013). Political participation is possible in small scale and the party does not directly intervene in social life (Lee 2001: 249–250), as long as single persons or social groups do not revolt against the system. According to this, China differs from totalitarian systems and fulfils most of the criteria for an authoritarian system—it can be aligned in line B of Blum's model.

Political culture

The Japanese society on first sight seems strongly consensus-oriented—a paradigm of a consensus-democracy (Derichs and Lukner 2008: 283). But with higher rates of unemployment and a growing number of temporary employees on the job market, many Japanese families are confronted with a decreasing economic status (*ibid.*: 273), resulting in less of a tendency towards a mutually shared centre and a growing political pluralism (*ibid.*: 282). The political system is called into question frequently: as Andrew J. Nathan shows, only 24.3 percent of the Japanese people think that their form of government is best for them and 51 percent are not satisfied with how democracy works in their country (2007: 20). Still, the Japanese want to keep and strengthen their democratic form of government, since it is better than the alternatives (*ibid.*: 6; see also Neumann 2002: 164). According to this, the political system is called into question, while at the same time the greater political order is accepted. Indeed there are many opposition parties in Japan, but since 1955 the dominance of the Jiyūminshutō 自由民主党 (Liberal Democratic Party [LDP]) is noticeable—changes of government or regime are rare, which is in line with the case of moderate pluralism. In summary, Japan's political culture is neither polarised nor concordant and follows line B in Blum's model.

The situation in South Korea is similar. More than 50 percent of the South Korean population are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country (Nathan 2007: 21) and 23.5 percent of the South Koreans think that their form of government is best for them (*ibid.*: 5). The acceptance of the democratic order is broad and stable among the South Korean people. With the exception of topics concerning North Korea, South Korea's political parties do not differ much from each other (Croissant 2008: 317). There are no strong anti-system parties, but the relationship between government and opposition is confrontational (*ibid.*: 309). A clear classification of South Korea's political culture as polarised or concordant is thus not possible—South Korea follows line B in Blum's model.

The last Chinese government under Hú Jǐntāo 胡锦涛 had the goal to construct a 'harmonious society' in the PRC—a vision that allegedly won broad support among

the Chinese population (Zhu 2008: 126). There is a supportive stance towards this political goal and the system as a whole (He 2009: 58)—94.4 percent of the Chinese think that their form of government is best for them and 81.7 percent are satisfied with how democracy works in their country (Nathan 2007: 2, 4). At the same time, resistance movements are frequent—but they are mostly small, local, and isolated (Zhao 2008a: 62) and do not lead to regime changes. According to this and in direct comparison with Japan and South Korea, pluralism as defined by Hallin and Mancini is not a clear force in the PRC. The political culture is mostly concordant—therefore China has to be aligned in line C of Blum’s model.

Freedom of media

In Japan, freedom of press has been constitutionally guaranteed since 1947 (Pharr 1996: 12; Cooper-Chen 1997: 175-176). The Constitution also forbids any form of censorship. There is no pre-censorship, understood as the preventive control of media content by the state or public institutions. Still, Japan can not be described as totally free of pre-censorship, since the press club system leads to prevalent self-censorship among journalists—it makes individual investigation of topics and news coverage almost impossible and prevents the publication of content that is possibly displeasing for informants (Cooper-Chen 1997: 192). NHK is especially often confronted with governmental interference via authorities undermining critical or unpleasant news coverage (Legewie 2010: 18). Among the criteria defined by Daniel Delhaes (2002: 49) only one is met in Japan: the licensing of broadcasters. Reprimands and interference from the state are not based on legal grounds and are followed by journalists voluntarily. Still, a clear classification of Japan as entirely free of censorship is not possible. The prevalent self-censorship among journalists cannot be disregarded. This leaves Japan somewhere between line A and B in Blum’s model.

In South Korea, media freedom is guaranteed constitutionally as well—censorship is forbidden under the Constitution of 1987 (Croissant 2008: 333). Still, media freedom in South Korea is not unlimited. One example is the National Security Law, which gives the government a framework to undermine unwelcome news coverage—for example, information about pro-North Korean organisations. At the same time, the government attempts to censor online content about North Korea and also tries to limit news from the North from flowing into the country (Freedom House 2012). Still, there is no pre-censorship; there is no removing or deleting of unwelcome media content before it is published. Forbidden content is only punished after publication. Diverse forms of post-censorship, including financial punishment and even deprivation of liberty, lead journalists to frequently self-censor; they also abide by codes of conduct (Sung 2004: 174). Post-censorship is implemented when

national security is at risk or when an individual's, a business', or the government's rights are at stake. Also, every publication has to be registered before being allowed to operate (Youn 1998: 181), a measure that can be understood as a form of licensing, even though each registration has to be approved as long as it fulfils certain criteria (Sung 2004: 91-92). This and the prohibition of certain content are two aspects of censorship brought into game by Delhaes. There is no outright pre-censorship in the media system, but as the government frequently draws on laws that limit media freedom and offences against those regulations are penalised relatively harshly, South Korea cannot be classified as free of censorship. Due to relatively harsh forms of post-censorship, South Korea is also aligned with line B.

In the Chinese media system, censorship is prevalent. Many of the aspects Delhaes brought up occur in the PRC. There are organs that are in charge of licensing and censoring, lists of forbidden books, and restraints on certain contents and job-approvals for journalists, who also censor themselves out of fear of post-censorship measures. Media content that is unwished for can be censored before publication by the propaganda departments of the CCP, the Guójiā Guǎngbō Diànyǐng Diànshì Zǒngjú 国家广播电影电视总局 (State Administration for Radio, Film, and Television [SARFT]) and the Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó Xīnwén Chūbǎn Zǒngshǔ 中华人民共和国新闻出版总署 (General Administration for Press and Publication [GAPP]) on central and local levels (Zhao 2008a: 31). Topics that are either forbidden or underlie particularly strict control are, among others, unemployment, social unrest, and the private lives of high-ranking politicians (McCormick and Liu 2003: 153). So it seems the Chinese media are subject to permanent censorship—but this is true only in theory. Regarding the sheer size of the media sector it is not possible to control each and every publication (Hemelryk, Keane, and Keane 2002: 7). In reality, censorship is volatile and unpredictable (Yu 2009: 115). Although this does not mean that journalists have the same freedom as their counterparts in democratic countries, it still shows that we cannot align China clearly in line C. It is thus classified between line B and C in Blum's model.

Ownership of media

Japan's media businesses are privately owned and commercial. Journalists are recruited directly from universities (Cooper-Chen 1997: 193), most of the media businesses are stock corporations owned by families and private persons with a background in media (Westney 1996: 49-50) and governed by presidents and management boards (Hachmeister and Rager 1997: 109, 153, 182, 195, 204, 210, 253). One central feature of the Japanese media businesses is the strong concentration of ownership (Cooper-Chen 1997: 21-22). The big daily newspapers not only own private broadcasting companies but also magazines, weekly newspapers, and sports

newspapers (*ibid.*: 22). This led to the emergence of five large media conglomerates, each with one of the large daily newspapers at its core (Legewie 2010: 21). One exception to the private ownership is NHK, which has to be classified as state-owned: it was established by the state and is financially controlled by the parliament and the government, which also appoints the most important authorities (Köllner 2003: 116-117). Due to the size and importance of NHK, Japan's media are therefore privately and publicly owned. Japan follows line B in Blum's model.

South Korea's press and broadcasting businesses are also largely privately organised and owned by large families (Lent 1998: 154), their own employees or other private businesses and—as is the case in Japan—often have the form of stock companies (Sung 2004: 134). Exceptions are media published by religious organisations, the public broadcasters (Heo, Uhm, and Chang 2000: 626), and daily newspapers that are partly in public ownership (Kwak 2012: 72). South Korea's media landscape therefore includes both publicly and privately owned media business, some media corporations have both private and public characteristics. Thus, South Korea follows line B in Blum's model.

The situation is different in the PRC: there are no privately owned media at all (He 2004: 22). Private and foreign investors can only invest in areas that have nothing to do with the production of editorial content, e.g. advertising, distribution, or print (Zhao 2008b: 41-42). Their share cannot exceed 49 percent (Yin 2006: 29). Private ownership of media is prohibited in the PRC (Zhao 2008b: 42). Editorial content can only be published by the state, the government, or public organisations like women's or trade unions or mass organisations (Wu 2000: 53-54). All these publishers are obligated to serve as mouthpieces for the CCP (Zhao 1998: 22). All journalists are state employees (Abels 2006: 7) and have to obtain licenses from the state before they can work for a media business (Zhao 2008a: 28-29). The Chinese media fulfil all the criteria Pürer puts forth for state-owned media in dictatorships (2003: 420-421). Therefore the PRC follows line C in Blum's model.

Funding of media

Japan's print media are financed to a large part by the audience market. Sales profit is the most important form of financing and makes up for 50 percent of total revenues (Hediger 2007: 305; Cooper-Chen 1997: 66). Revenues from advertising have a share of 30 percent of the total income (Saito and Takeshita 2008: 388). The Japanese press is thus mostly financed through the market, but also enjoys several privileges on the part of the state, e.g. tax advantages, fixed prices, or reduced toll fees (FPC 2004: 28-29, 113). The commercial broadcasting media generate their income from advertising but also enjoy similar privileges in taxes and toll fees as the press (*ibid.*: 113). According to Japan's broadcasting law NHK is not allowed to air

advertising (*ibid.*: 58). It generates 97 percent of its income from broadcasting fees paid by 38 million Japanese households (White 2005: 87; FPC 2004: 58; Hachmeister and Rager 1997: 76). NHK's budget has to be approved by the parliament every year (FPC 2004: 58). Japan's media are thus financed largely from the market, but the influence of the state manifests itself in the area of public broadcasting and several public advancements. Japan has to be aligned in line B in Blum's model.

The South Korean print media get four fifths of their financing by advertisements and one fifth by sales (Han 2005: 64). There is also indirect financial support on part of the state, especially in economically difficult times; for example, in the 1990s the state made banks give loans to media businesses (Kim and Hong 2001: 88). There are no other forms of state support, like tax advantages (Kwak 2012: 53). The commercial broadcasters strongly depend on advertising revenue while the public broadcasters are financed not only by advertising but also by broadcasting fees (Hanawa 2005: 90)—the ratio for KBS is, for example, 60 to 40 percent (Kwak 2012: 93). South Korea therefore follows line B in Blum's model.

The status quo of the state-owned Chinese media changed in the 1990s, when the state—challenged by an increasing budget deficit—was not able anymore to pay unlimited financial subsidies to media businesses (To 1998: 268). Since then, the media were made responsible for their own finances. The more income the media generated on the market, the less subsidies they obtained from the state (*ibid.*: 271). This new commercial orientation of the media made them more independent from the state—structurally and also politically (Wu 2000: 57). Today, advertising is the most important source of revenue for the Chinese press (Zhao 2008a: 84), with a share of more than 50 percent of total income (Wu 2000: 59). However, especially media in far off regions still get financial support from the state (Abels 2006: 99). Broadcasting companies are also strongly dependent on advertising revenues. Today, advertising's share in total revenue is between 90 and 99 percent (Xu 2009: 156; Berry 2009: 73). Broadcasters still get some money from the government, but these subsidies are more of a symbolic nature (Lee 2001: 246). Therefore, both the Chinese press and broadcasting companies generate their income through both the market and the state. China thus also follows line B in Blum's model.

Political parallelism

The large Japanese dailies, NHK, and commercial TV stations tend to publish objective facts and avoid commentaries or subjective opinions (Legewie 2010: 4). Political parties are not directly linked to media businesses—external pluralism as defined by Hallin and Mancini (2004: 29-30) is not strong. NHK, again, is an exception: This public broadcaster is directly linked to the parliament and the government (Hachmeister and Rager 1997: 76). The Japanese media commit themselves to the

principle of neutrality and objectivity (Takeshita and Ida 2009: 159). Differences in editorial lines are hard to find, but they do exist; one could speak of an ‘ad hoc’ form of political parallelism (FPC 2004: 2; Sugiyama 2000: 199). *Sankei Shimbun*, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, and *Yomiuri Shimbun* tend to be conservative and on the right side of the political spectrum, while *Asahi Shimbun* and *Mainichi Shimbun* are more on the left, liberal side (FPC 2004: 21; Akuto 1996: 319). Through the press club system, Japan’s media are in close organisational relationships with political institutions (Pharr 1996: 9) and journalists have close relations with their informants (Krauss 1996: 109). Journalists do not tend to be active in political life. However, former high-ranking bureaucrats of the Sōmu-shō 総務省 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications [MIC]) often serve in high positions in the media industry (Cooper-Chen 1997: 26), regardless of their party membership. The Japanese people do not consume media according to their political views—this can be attributed to the fact that media content is very similar (Derichs and Lukner 2008: 280). Political parallelism is neither strong nor weak in Japan’s media system, which is indicative of a classification of Japan in line B of Blum’s model.

South Korea’s newspapers traditionally show characteristics of a political press (Sung 2004: 24) and tend to be partisan (Kwak 2012: 80). The large national dailies show conservative editorial orientations (Heo, Uhm, and Chang. 2000: 618). Other newspapers are more progressive and on the left side of the political spectrum (Kwak 2012: 34). Readers consume newspapers according to their political orientation: the left-sided papers attract intellectuals and workers, while the right-sided papers attract readers among a politically conservative elite (Heo et al. 2000: 618–619). The political orientation of the broadcasters changes with every change of government: they support the ruling party and are more critical of the opposition (Kim and Kwon 2009: 182). Differences in editorial lines and the political orientation are apparent around the time of elections and when it comes to topics concerning North Korea (Han 2005: 29). Therefore, in the area of media content political parallelism is rather strong. Organisational relations to public institutions exist in the area of public broadcasting, partly due to the fact that some media are published by clerical organisations. Media do strengthen and support certain political parties but are not directly organisationally linked to them. Many South Korean journalists utilize their relationships with political actors to pursue a career in politics (ibid.: 53). This leads to a situation where journalists tend to report positively about the parties they favour—at the expense of neutrality and objectivity (Choi 2007: 42). Therefore, internal pluralism is weak in the South Korean media landscape. Political parallelism is strongly developed in most of the areas discussed here. Thus, South Korea follows line C in Blum’s model.

The Chinese media’s role as mouthpieces for the CCP is reflected in the political media content. The media are in close connections with political organisations: they are owned by the state and political institutions, trade unions, assemblies, or coop-

eratives that publish newspapers that address their members and thus certain societal groups (Zhao 1998: 18). However, they can only represent the interests of their readers in a framework that is allowed by the CCP. Politicians have close connections to high-ranking media executives (Lee 2001: 213). Seven out of ten journalists are members of the CCP or the Zhōngguó Gòngchǎnzhǔyì Qīngniántuán 中国共产主义青年团 (Communist Youth League of China) (ibid.: 248). Media personnel are appointed based on political criteria (Zhao 2008a: 28-29). Journalists can only excel at their job if their political attitude matches that of the CCP. Also, many journalists later become officials in the propaganda department (ibid.: 40-41). Chinese media consumers do not have the opportunity to read or watch media according to their political attitudes—there is no respective diversity in the Chinese political and media system; therefore, the characteristic of ‘partisanship of media audience’ cannot be applied to the PRC.³ Chinese journalists have to form the public opinion according to the political directives and political views of the CCP; they are expected to deliver the ‘right media content’ (ibid.: 105-106). Therefore, journalists do not communicate neutral political information. Political parallelism is strong in the Chinese media system, which follows line C in Blum’s model.

State control over media

In the area of media ownership, the Japanese state does not have much influence or possibilities for control. As shown earlier in this paper, all the Japanese media businesses (NHK being one exception) are privately owned. The situation is similar in the area of media financing, although the state ensures control to a certain degree by indirectly supporting the media financially. NHK’s yearly budget has to be approved by the government (FPC 2004: 58), giving it a relatively high degree of influence. In Japan—as in every media system—there are some laws and regulations under which the media operate, especially in the area of broadcasting. According to broadcasting law, the NHK has to report politically unpartisan content, but at the same time it is required to promote modern and traditional Japanese culture (Cooper-Chen 1997: 181). The private broadcasters also have to follow basic content-related legal standards (Köllner 2003: 116). All the broadcasting businesses can only operate after having obtained licenses (Sugiyama 2000: 194). There is also an anti-monopoly law for the broadcasting stations (Cooper-Chen 1997: 179). In contrast, Japan has no press law. However, there are laws that are binding for both the press and the broadcasters: the defamation law is one example. It allows the suing of media companies for publishing defamatory content (ibid.: 186). Other examples that can restrict the media are the right to privacy or the law for the protection of

3 The same is true for the concepts of external and internal pluralism as defined by Hallin and Mancini (2004).

youth (*ibid.*: 182, 189). Moreover, the media are not allowed to publish content that could threaten national security or social order (FPC 2004: 103). Also, the political communication during elections is regulated rather strictly (Pharr 1996: 7). With the exception of NHK, the Japanese state does not control the appointment of media personnel; journalists are recruited directly from universities (Cooper-Chen 1997: 193). Particularly because of the strict control the Japanese state poses over NHK and the press club system, but also due to the strict regulation of political communication during elections, Japan follows line B in Blum's model.

In South Korea, the state and government have traditionally always tried to control the media (Kim and Hong 2001: 84). As in Japan, in the area of media ownership the state does not have much room for control—public broadcasting is one exception. Media financing also does not give the state many possibilities for control. However, financially weak media businesses obtain financial help from the state (*ibid.*: 88). Still, the media are financially much more dependent on the market than on the government. In South Korea, there are more than 50 laws that are directly or indirectly related to the media, including the press law and the broadcasting law (Han 2005: 36). The South Korean constitution states that the media are not allowed to violate individual and privacy rights, public morality, or social ethics—the degree of penalty ranges from imposing fines to imprisonment of journalists (*ibid.*: 41-42). Other laws that affect the media are the National Security Law—which is deployed mostly when it comes to topics concerning North Korea (Croissant 2008: 332)—and the rules for registration of media businesses (Sung 2004: 91-92). Media ownership, concentration, and competition are regulated by law; however, the regulations have been relaxed over the past few years. The cross-ownership of media businesses is still regulated quite strictly (Kwak 2012: 110). The state also controls broadcasting content (Heo, Uhm, and Chang 2000: 622; Kwak 2012: 108) and appoints media personnel in broadcasting. The press law contains qualification criteria for publishers and editors too (Sung 2004: 92), but these are not of political nature. Censorship in the South Korean media system was already discussed above. Most important to note is the strict control over content related to North Korea. State control over media is weak in the areas of ownership, financing, and media personnel—but due to the rather strict control over the public broadcasters, the regulations on registration, and the constraints on news about and from North Korea, South Korea follows line B in Blum's model.

The Chinese state poses strict control over the media in the area of ownership. At the same time, it has largely withdrawn from financing. However, as was discussed above, it still supports media in poor regions and many of the financially independent media businesses still get symbolic financial support (Abels 2006: 104; Lee

2001: 246). There are many laws that directly or indirectly affect the media,⁴ including defamation laws (Binding 2012: 16-17) and regulations constraining the access to government information (China Internet Information Center 2008). Media concentration, competition, and ownership are regulated quite strictly (Hediger 2007: 302; To 1998: 274-275). Broadcasters have to obtain licenses from the SARFT before they are allowed to operate (Abels 2006: 95) and follow strict content and production-related standards set by the government. The press is subject to similar regulations concerning licenses, content, and production (Zhao 2008a: 80; To 1998: 275). As already discussed earlier, the appointment of media personnel is also largely in the hands of the state; political criteria play an important role for the selection of journalists (Abels 2006: 94). Only in some cases do media businesses single-handedly decide whom they employ; still, their choice has to be approved by the authorities (Zhao 1998: 101).

With media financing being an exception, the Chinese media are under strict control in all the aspects discussed here. Although the control cannot be permanently and completely implemented due to the sheer size and complexity of the Chinese media system, China—in contrast with Japan and South Korea—follows line C in Blum's model.

Media culture

The most important Japanese media companies are not characterised by investigative, critical journalism—the main reason for this is the press club system that undermines independent investigative research and serves to portray the government positively by giving journalists suitable information (Farley 1996: 136). The resulting self-censorship and the intentional sparing of critical information on the part of Japanese journalists lead to a rather concordant media culture. Political players are usually respected and rarely criticised by the media that are members of the clubs. Investigative, critical journalism is practised by weekly newspapers, magazines, small private TV stations, freelance journalists, and columnists that are excluded from the press clubs and thus more independent from sources and informants (Cooper-Chen 1997: 32; Farley 1996: 140). These 'outsiders' (see, for example, Legewie 2010) publish personal, speculative, and scandalous content (Farley 1996: 141). In the past few years no political scandal was exposed by the press club members (Legewie 2010: 12). Since the 'outsiders' serve as watchdogs for the public while the 'insiders' more or less serve the state (*ibid.*: 30), Japan follows line B in Blum's model.

4 The laws and regulations mentioned here are by no means complete; they serve as examples for the numerous regulations under which the Chinese media operate.

In South Korea, conservative newspapers support conservative political parties (Kwak 2012: 56). When a progressive government is in power, they function as a tool for criticism and control, especially by giving the conservative opposition a platform for voicing its opinions (*ibid.*). When a conservative government is in power, it is the progressive media that acts in this regard (*ibid.*: 106). The public broadcasters support the political status quo, no matter who is in power at the moment (*ibid.*: 99). Therefore, in South Korea there are both investigative and concordant media. Because the South Korean media are mostly privately owned and financed through the market, they tend to avoid reporting on economic scandals and support the interests of economic actors (Choi 2007: 40). Therefore South Korea follows line B in Blum's model; still, in the area of broadcasting and economic news coverage, concordance prevails.

The Chinese media have to adhere to the party-principle: they have to follow the ideology of the party, propagate political programs, principles, and guidelines, accept the leadership of the CCP, and adhere to organisational principles and media guidelines (Zhao 1998: 19). They support the political system, respect the government, and avoid topics that could threaten political stability (for example, social unrest) (Zhao 2005: 67). However, investigative journalism does exist in China. Especially boulevard newspapers, weekend editions, and local newspapers often break political taboos by criticising the government at times and more readily address social problems (Zhao 1998: 157; Chan 2003: 163). It is important to note that criticism is only possible in a framework set by the party. The media cannot criticise the political system or the party as a whole, but only address single (mostly local) social problems (Hong 2006: 156). Still, investigative elements exist in China's media culture and cannot be completely disregarded. Thus, the PRC also follows line B in Blum's model—although concordance is prevalent.

Media orientation

As stated above, advertising is an important form of media financing in Japan. This leads to a situation in which the media itself becomes a product that can be sold on the market (Farley 1996: 139). Media companies try to keep advertisers satisfied in order to maintain their financial support, production technologies are constantly optimised, and the number of employees is regularly reduced (Westney 1996: 67). At the same time, the media are in strong competition with each other for growth: they want to expand their markets geographically and therefore try to position themselves within diverse (including not media-related) activities—cultural sponsoring or production of online databases are two examples (*ibid.*: 69). Subscriptions are offered at reduced prices, sometimes newspaper copies are given away for free, and magazines often publish fabricated stories in order to improve revenues (Legewie

2010: 15). Broadcasting and print companies often engage in market research in order to satisfy viewers and readers. The media's public responsibility is less important than their economic success; profit is often more important than journalistic quality. Thus, Japan is classified in line A of Blum's model.

Since 1987, the South Korean media landscape has been increasingly shaped by competition (Heo, Uhm, and Chang 2000: 621). In the area of print this is illustrated by the increase of newspaper pages to attract more readers and make more space for advertisements (*ibid.*: 619)—a battle for customers and advertisers—resulting in a decline of journalistic quality (Kwak 2012: 33). Potential readers are also allured by free copies and expensive promotional gifts (*ibid.*: 54). Print media try to attract a wider audience in order to gain more advertising revenues. At the same time, newspapers also function as watchdogs of society by criticising and controlling political actors, as discussed above. South Korean public broadcasting is traditionally seen as a medium with a quite strong public service orientation—this can be seen in the rather strong state control of the broadcasters (*ibid.*: 92). However, the broadcasters' public responsibility is constrained by their dependence on advertising. Thus, they try to attract a wide audience by airing popular entertainment programs. In doing so, they position themselves in direct competition with private stations (*ibid.*: 93). Still, the public broadcasters also fulfil supportive functions for the government and try to comply with their traditional public service function. This leads to a classification of South Korea in line B of Blum's model.

As discussed above, the Chinese media are commercially oriented when it comes to finances. At the same time, they have to fulfil political functions for the state and the government. However, today the Chinese media are far from being mere mouthpieces of the CCP and can be best described as 'Party Publicity Inc.' (He 2000: 143) with a 'capitalist body' and a 'socialist face' (Lee 2003: 18). Inside the framework set by the CCP, the media have to act commercially and thus find themselves torn between political correctness and commercial competitiveness (Huang and Lee 2003: 54). They hence try to find strategies to attract readers, viewers, and advertisers (via free subscriptions or evening editions, lotteries, market research, entertaining topics, etc.), while at the same time satisfying the needs of the CCP and serving as a platform for addressing and criticising some societal problems (see above). Therefore, the Chinese media are both public service and commerce oriented and follow line B in Blum's model.

Conclusion

In this paper I used Blum's 'extended comparison approach' to compare the media systems of the PRC, Japan, and South Korea. The following table shows the classification of the three nations according to Blum's model.

Table 2 Classification and comparison

Dimension	Japan	South Korea	PRC
1 Political system	A—democratic	A—democratic	B—authoritarian
2 Political culture	B—ambivalent	B—ambivalent	C—concordant
3 Freedom of media	A/B—no/occasional censorship	B—occasional censorship	B/C—occasional/ permanent censorship
4 Media ownership	B—private and public	B—private and public	C—public
5 Media financing	B—market and state	B—market and state	B—market and state
6 Political parallelism	B—middle	C—strong	C—strong
7 State control over media	B—middle	B—middle	C—strong
8 Media culture	B—ambivalent	B—ambivalent	B—ambivalent
9 Media orientation	A—commercial	B—divergent	B—divergent

Source: Author's representation based on Blum 2005: 9

As the table shows, a clear alignment of the countries in one of the three lines is not always possible. This could be explained by the fact that Blum did not elaborate the categories in detail; in some cases, it was not clear how the dimensions should be understood. One example is the category of freedom of media: here, it is not clear whether Blum refers only to pre-censorship or also includes forms of post-censorship. As no media system is free of post-censorship, the model also raises the question about where to draw the line between 'no censorship' and 'occasional censorship'. Another problem that arose while applying the model was that some of Blum's categories were originally designed for democratic countries. One example is the category of 'political parallelism', which originally comes from Hallin and Mancini (2004) and was later adopted by Blum. This category could not be applied to China in all aspects as there is no respective diversity in the Chinese system.

Some of the categories in Blum's model need to be further elaborated in order to make the model applicable to all countries in the world. As the following results show, the alignment of the countries in Blum's model is necessarily very schematic. One authoritarian system (PRC) was compared with two democracies (Japan and

South Korea). While the political cultures of Japan and South Korea are ambivalent, the PRC's political culture was classified as concordant.

In the area of media freedom, Japan was aligned between lines A and B and China was aligned between lines B and C. According to the schematic classification, South Korea follows the middle line. Still, the PRC can clearly be distinguished from its democratic neighbours, as pre- and post-censorship are prevalent in the Chinese media system. In South Korea, only topics concerning North Korea are strictly censored. The Japanese media system is shaped by the press club system that leads to prevalent self-censorship among journalists. In all three countries, broadcasting businesses have to obtain licenses before being allowed to operate; in South Korea and China the press has to be licensed as well. However, the demands to obtain a license are much more loose in South Korea. Freedom of the press is in theory guaranteed in each country but not utterly unconditional. The restraints are loosest in Japan and most rigorous in the PRC.

In the area of media ownership, China can also be clearly distinguished from Japan and South Korea. In the two democratic countries, there are private and public media, whereas in China every single media business is state-owned. Again, South Korea follows a middle line, having more public media than Japan. Still, it is closer to Japan than to China in this regard.

The media are financed both through the market and the state in all the three countries. Market financing is the most important source of income for most of the media businesses in East Asia, except Japan's NHK, which depends completely on broadcasting fees. None of the media systems are entirely independent of direct or indirect financial support on the part of the state.

Political parallelism is weakest in Japan. The daily newspapers display tendential political orientations; NHK is strongly characterised by political parallelism. Internal pluralism is strong. In South Korea, external pluralism can clearly be distinguished. Media voluntarily support favoured political parties. The Chinese media support the CCP, but they have to do so. Organisational relations between media and politics are strong in Japan because of the press club system and—in the case of NHK—because of its organisation and financing. This is also the case for South Korea's public broadcasters; here, the print media do not have direct organisational relations with political parties. As the Chinese media are owned by the state, the organisational relations to politics are rather strong. The tendency of media personnel to be active in political life is strongest in South Korea. Partisanship of the media audience is not a given in Japan and not possible in the PRC, but quite strong in South Korea. The Japanese media follow the principle of neutrality—this is not the case in the PRC and South Korea. In the area of political parallelism, South Korea is more like China; however, it is based on voluntariness in South Korea but often dictated in China.

State control over media is strongest in China. The state does not have many possibilities for control in Japan and South Korea, except in the area of public broadcasting. The legal framework within which the media operate is similar in the two democracies, although it is tighter in South Korea. The Chinese media are subject to rigorous state control in every aspect, except media financing.

All the three countries have an ambivalent media culture, situated between investigative journalism and concordance. However, investigative reporting is only possible in the framework set by the CCP in China; although concordance prevails, the media try to test the limits of what is allowed, which is why one cannot speak of an outright concordant media culture. Japan's media can function as watchdogs of society but voluntarily refrain from critical reporting in many cases. Investigative journalism is exercised by non-members of the press clubs. In South Korea, media support favoured political parties and criticise others. So, the ambivalent media culture is based on very diverse grounds in China, Japan, and South Korea.

Japan's media are above all commerce oriented; journalistic quality and public responsibility take a backseat, considering the competitive context the media find themselves in. The Chinese and South Korean media are also confronted with harsh competition, but in direct contrast to Japan they put more emphasis on their social responsibility—although in very different ways. The Chinese media fulfil functions for the government but also try to criticise some small-scale problems on behalf of the population. The South Korean media perform a more obvious watchdog function than is the case in Japan and act more on behalf of the population than is possible in China. Although the PRC and South Korea follow the same line in Blum's model, the divergent media orientation is not of the same kind.

As Table 2 indicates, the PRC is mostly shaped by political influences and can be clearly distinguished from the two democratic countries. South Korea, which was governed by authoritarian regimes for a long time, can often be situated between Japan and China. This points to the strong dependence of East Asia's media systems on the political systems they are embedded in. However, regional similarities exist despite different political systems (e.g. financing and media culture), but they do so only on the surface and are based on highly diverse grounds. On closer examination, differences prevail.

This shows that the relevance of the media still lies in the functions they perform in a given political system—they are not independent from the political and legal framework they operate in. Still, by performing functions for state and society, the media are powerful in both democratic and non-democratic systems. Their most important functions are creating publicity and providing information. By doing so, they are able to steer the public discourse and to determine what people know and talk about. Often the information published by the media serves as a basis for political action, among other things. As the results of this research show, this happens in different ways in different political systems. This can be explained with the example

of creating publicity: in democratic countries like Japan and South Korea the media have a share in creating transparency in the political system by publishing political information chosen by the media itself; in authoritarian systems like the PRC, the media mostly publishes the information the government authorities, in this example the CCP, wants on the agenda—here, the party controls the public discourse via the media.

As the results of this paper are based on secondary literature, more research will be necessary to complete the findings and deal with the research questions in more depth. Interviews with media experts, media representatives in East Asia, politicians, or relevant non-governmental organisations would be of great help in deepening the key findings and drawing an up-to-date picture of East Asia's media systems.

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GLOSSARY

Japanese

<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>	朝日新聞	Asahi News, Japanese newspaper
<i>Jiyūminshutō</i>	自由民主党	Liberal Democratic Party of Japan
<i>Mainichi Shimbun</i>	毎日新聞	Mainichi News, Japanese newspaper
<i>Nihon Keizai Shimbun</i>	日本経済新聞	Nihon Keizai News, Japanese economic newspaper
<i>Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai</i>	日本放送協会	Japan Broadcasting Corporation
<i>Sankei Shimbun</i>	産経新聞	Sankei News, Japanese newspaper
<i>Sōmu-shō</i>	総務省	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
<i>Yomiuri Shimbun</i>	読売新聞	Yomiuri News, Japanese newspaper

Korean

<i>Chosŏn Ilbo</i>	조선일보	Korea Daily, South Korean newspaper
<i>Chungang Ilbo</i>	중앙일보	Chungang Daily, South Korean newspaper
<i>Hanguk Pangsong Kongsā</i>	한국 방송 공사	Korea Broadcasting Station
<i>Munhwa Pangsong Chusikhoesa</i>	문화방송주식회사	Munhwa ('Cultural') Broadcasting Corporation
<i>No Mu-hyŏn (Roh Moo-hyun)</i>	노무현	(1946–2009); former politician and president of the Republic of Korea (2003–08)
<i>Tong-a Ilbo</i>	동아일보	East Asia Daily, South Korean newspaper

Chinese

<i>Guójiā Guǎngbō Diànyǐng Diànshì Zǒngjú</i>	国家广播电影电视总局	State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television
<i>Hú Jǐntāo</i>	胡锦涛	(b. 1942); Chinese politician and former president of the PRC (2003–13)
<i>Rénmín Rìbào</i>	人民日报	People's Daily, Chinese newspaper
<i>Xīnhuá tōngxùnshè</i>	新华通讯社	New China News Agency
<i>Zhōngguó Gòngchǎnzǔyì Qīngniántuán</i>	中国共产主义青年团	Communist Youth League of China
<i>Zhōngguó Gòngchǎndǎng</i>	中国共产党	Chinese Communist Party
<i>Zhōngguó Zhōngyāng Diànshìtái</i>	中国中央电视台	China Central Television Station
<i>Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó Xīnwén Chūbǎn Zǒngshǔ</i>	中华人民共和国新闻出版总署	General Administration for Press and Publication

Zhōngyāng Rénmín Guǎngbō
Diàntái

中央人民广播电台

China National Radio Station