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## Editorial [International Journal of Press/Politics]

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## Editorial

Abraham Lincoln is famously quoted as saying: “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.” I encountered this sentence as a student twenty years ago and it became so central to my thinking that I made it the epigraph of my undergraduate dissertation. The quote highlights an essential condition of peaceful coexistence in complex societies: that there is a degree of agreement on what is true, as one can only be fooled if what he or she was led to believe can be proven false. Even more importantly, those words suggest that citizens can defend themselves from systematic deception, which in turn implies that politicians and their supporters would be ill advised to try to lie and mislead their way into power.

Two decades since I discovered that citation, many factors are challenging the mixture of realism and optimism it communicates. First, even the attribution to Lincoln is dubious at best. According to no less than the Abraham Lincoln Association, an equally plausible contender is P. T. Barnum, an American showman, politician, and circus founder who both propagated and debunked popular hoaxes in his time. Secondly, campaigns across the world seem to provide many examples of effective attempts at fooling, if not all, most of the people. Thirdly, the context in which political communication occurs seems to become increasingly more fertile for deception than enlightenment, as democratic norms and institutions get eroded from within and from without. Finally, the very definitions of who is fooled and who is trying to fool others are put into question, as arbiters of truth see their credibility challenged, political conflict weakens societal consensus on relevant issues, and strategic communicators become increasingly skillful at leveraging the innate human tendencies to devote scarce attention to public affairs, take shortcuts when evaluating complex information, and let group identities color and at times trump factual judgments.

As scholars and students of political communication, we alone cannot fix these problems, but we can be part of the solution by asking relevant questions, providing answers that are as empirically accurate as possible, and advocating for policy changes based on our findings. We can, in other words, contribute to and engage with the complex network of interdependent forces and institutions that strive to ensure that one cannot fool all of the people all of the time, as Lincoln (or Barnum) would have said.

To this end and in this spirit, the *International Journal of Press/Politics* publishes interdisciplinary research that sheds light on the relationship between media and politics in a cross-national perspective. The journal aims to understand how structural, organizational, cultural, and individual factors shape the ways in which citizens, journalists, and politicians interact across a variety of media. It also aspires to explain the outcomes of these interactions, not just in terms of short-term winners and losers but also with respect to the maintenance and transformation of institutions, interests, and ideas that shape policy, culture, and society in the long term. Finally, it seeks to highlight the implications of these processes and outcomes for the ways in which people can (and cannot) understand the forces that shape their lives and exercise agency to improve their conditions. This includes investigating how political communication can influence the efficacy and responsiveness of public and private institutions, as well as

the balance between cooperation and conflict within and between different political communities.

Social science research on these topics is as important as it is challenging. Although political communication scholarship has blossomed in both quantity and quality in the past two decades, its objects of study have undergone rapid and dramatic change, often creating or reviving societal challenges such as those I outlined earlier. Hence, established concepts, theories, and methods may no longer fully capture the different facets of contemporary complex realities. While the methodological toolkits through which we can understand the social world have expanded and improved, as scholars we routinely confront surprising, sometimes shocking phenomena that require reexamination of what we think we know. Whereas the discipline of political communication is now established in universities and research centers across the Western world and, more unevenly, in the rest of the globe, the questions, theories, and normative assumptions that shape the field still originate from a handful of established democracies. This in turn limits our ability to ask questions and provide answers that can travel beyond those countries, which is crucial in an interconnected world where most of the population lives in non-democratic regimes. Meeting these challenges will require imagination, collaboration between different disciplines, and a wide gaze that spans across different corners of the world while being aware of and alert to local specificities. *IJPP* has always played a constructive role in bridging different intellectual communities to tackle complex issues and I enthusiastically renew this commitment.

Within this general orientation, *IJPP* aims to shed light on the nexus between *politics* and the *media*, and on how these relationships in turn affect citizens, as well as being shaped by them. The first term, politics, encompasses the interplay of parties, interest groups, social movements, and any other type of organization that aims to shape patterns of collective action and to affect collectively binding decisions by public and private institutions. Politics also includes the norms and regimes under which political actors operate, from liberal democracies to authoritarian systems to increasingly common hybrid arrangements. Finally, politics comprises the communities that political actors and institutions contribute to governing and that in turn exercise forms of control and agency over them, both as individuals and as social, cultural, and political aggregates.

The second term, media, is broadly understood as the multiple and interdependent ways in which politicians, newsmakers, and citizens produce, distribute, and engage with public affairs content. The word “press” originally denoted a specific technology—the printing press—and its meaning was later extended to the journalistic profession and the broadcast channels it employed to distribute the news. In contemporary media environments, and in this journal’s understanding, the meaning of “press” must be further expanded to include both professional and non-professional actors, and to capture the interconnections and overlaps between different types of media—digital and analog, fixed and mobile, broadcast and targeted, local, national and global.

What is most distinctive about *IJPP*, however, is its *international* orientation. The journal’s main purpose is to publish research that is of international relevance and transcends the boundaries of a single media or political system. Comparative research designs are well positioned to achieve these goals, but much work published in this

journal shows that studies of a single country or of a small number of countries can have relevant theoretical, conceptual, methodological, empirical, and normative implications that travel way beyond their scope. Research investigating the relationships between politics, the media, and citizens in countries about which we know little—broadly speaking, the Global South—is urgently needed, and is therefore welcome in this journal. So is research focused on Western democracies as long as it extends our knowledge of media and politics in and beyond them, for instance by shedding light on new or understudied phenomena, or by seeking to reassess, reform, and complement established theories, concepts, and methods to better understand the transformations that characterize political communication across the world.

The success of *IJPP* over the past twenty-three years shows that these goals can be achieved while enhancing cumulative research. Tangible evidence of this success includes the quality and diversity of the research the journal publishes, the breadth and strength of the community that identifies with it, the generosity and professionalism with which outstanding scholars from different disciplines serve as reviewers, and the journal's citation and visibility metrics. I am grateful to *IJPP*'s founders, Marvin Kalb and Pippa Norris, for endowing it with its unique identity, and to the colleagues who subsequently served as Editors—in chronological order, Alex Jones and Thomas Patterson, Silvio Waisbord, and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen—for nurturing and developing it. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Rasmus for his unwavering support during the transition and his insightful advice on the future of the journal. Finally, I am thankful to Robert Gorwa, who served impeccably as Managing Editor in the past few months, and to Sage Publications, and Martha Avtandilian in particular, for entrusting me with one of their shiniest gems and for offering constant assistance as I settled in my new role.

When I was appointed Editor-in-Chief of *IJPP*, I returned to the “big tent” approach that inspired its founders and reformed the governance of the journal to ensure it can grow and thrive in these challenging times. I am honored that three outstanding scholars will serve as Associate Editors: C.W. Anderson (University of Leeds), Sandra González-Bailón (University of Pennsylvania), and Sophie Lecheler (University of Vienna). I also found in Yannis Theocharis (University of Bremen) an excellent successor as Book Reviews Editor and in David Smith (Loughborough University) a dedicated Managing Editor. I also reappointed two-thirds of the journal's Editorial Board and invited a new cohort of colleagues to join them. I am grateful for their service and delighted that women and men are now equally represented in the Board.

The journal will publish two types of contributions: research articles of up to 8,000 words and book reviews of up to 1,000 words. Manuscripts of research articles will undergo peer review, overseen by myself or one of the Associate Editors. As Editor-in-Chief, I will decide whether to desk-reject manuscripts, I will assign to Associate Editors the submissions that need to be peer-reviewed, and I will make final decisions on each peer-reviewed manuscript in consultation with the Associate Editor involved. As social science research advances thanks to the refinement of established methods, the availability of rich and complex datasets, the use of mixed methods and multi-study designs, and the development of computational social science, the physical limits of a standard manuscript may sometimes hinder the thorough presentation of data, methods, and results. Hence, we encourage authors of research articles to take full advantage of the opportunity to submit Supplementary Information files, which will be

made available to Editors and reviewers and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, will be published and linked to the article on the journal's website. Our Book Reviews Editor will solicit and assess book reviews. We welcome expressions of interest to write a book review, with the caveat that we intend to mostly commission reviews by scholars who have a strong record of published work, ideally with books in the same area. Finally, we aim to host special issues that advance the frontiers of political communication research, whether by shedding light on new phenomena, evaluating and re-thinking classic concepts and theories, assessing the international applicability of ideas and evidence originating from specific countries and regions, or discussing and demonstrating methods that can help expand existing knowledge and address new research challenges. To this end, we welcome suggestions of suitable topics and potential guest editors.

Just like public affairs news, contemporary social science research faces the challenges of information abundance, attention scarcity, and an increasingly short shelf life. In this environment, a scholarly journal's main asset is the community of authors, reviewers, and readers that discuss, promote, and respond to the research it publishes. The most important task I can accomplish as Editor-in-Chief of *IJPP* is to nurture and serve its community so it continues to grow, thrive, and address the fundamental issues of our times. Together with the new editorial team, I hope I can count on your help in this pursuit.

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