

## EDITORIAL

The call for papers for this special issue on Asia specified that the articles must relate to Asia proper in general or to one or more of its three regions – East, Southeast and South. Furthermore, it sought contributions that provided ‘fresh insights on clearly defined themes’. I am thankful to the Editorial Board, particularly the associate editors, for expeditiously reviewing and selecting the articles that met the criteria.

Two of the articles – those by Anne Cooper-Chen and Phil Hammond – have an emphasis on Japan. Three – by Amos Owen Thomas, Ki-Sung Kwak, and Junhao Hong and Yu-Chiung Hsu – have an emphasis on East Asia or the Four Tigers. C. Anthony Giffard’s article looks at China as the venue of a global event. My overview, which looks at all three regions of Asia, and the contribution by Pradip N. Thomas, which has a focus on India, bring in some degree of balance. That there is an overwhelming focus on East Asia perhaps reflects the simple fact that East Asia is the *center* of Asia – something I have elucidated in my overview. However, despite that focus, almost all of the articles provide insights and themes applicable to all three regions.

Pradip N. Thomas follows the dystopian view that Stephen McDowell elucidated two years ago about the adverse effects of the neo-liberal approach on the political economy of communications, with particular reference to India. Thomas argues that India’s 1997 Broadcasting Bill has failed to recognize the right to communications as a basic human right because the bill fails to socialize information for the common good. Hong and Hsu, on the other hand, follow the utopian view that media liberalization and commercialization have indirectly caused media democratization – ‘which is the first step toward political and social democratization’ – in Asia’s newly industrialized countries (NICs). My overview also extols the virtues of media liberalization and democratization, as well as competition, in the Information Age.

Amos Owen Thomas offers a typology of government policies toward transnational satellite television in East Asia – a typology applicable to the rest of Asia as well. He argues that government policies and communication technology alone are insufficient to explain the success of this transnational medium without taking into consideration the interaction of other critical factors, such as political ideologies, economic policy, cultural and linguistic barriers, and so forth. Kwak, who analyzes the context of television broadcasting regulation in Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, concludes that Confucian culture has greatly influenced the regulatory structure in all three states, which have ‘con-

stantly maintained a strict monopoly over the regulation of television'. However, Kwak says the future role of the state in television broadcasting regulation is uncertain because of the perceived tension between state control and technological advances with the latter leading toward regionalization and globalization. Thus these two contributors also seem to cast doubt on the dystopian yearning to 'free' a country's media structure 'from the ideological and conceptual limitations of the neo-liberal account'.

Hammond looks at the Occidental perceptions of the Orient – Japan in particular. He asserts that the Western discussions of Japan under the concept of 'cultural difference' are underpinned by racial thinking. He urges a different approach to analyzing Asia – one that 'emphasizes social and historical factors and rejects the mystified view of culture as a power standing over us'. Cooper-Chen, who analyzes the influence of Japanese animated cartoons in the rest of Asia, asserts that the lack of children's television imports to Japan is more problematic than the 'values in or volume of exports from Japan'. Thus, while Hammond finds fault with the West for looking at Japan with ethnocentric eyes, Cooper-Chen finds fault with Japan for 'closing out cultures' and thereby breeding ethnocentrism.

Giffard's article examines how three international news agencies – Reuters, Associated Press and Inter Press Service – covered the 1995 UN-sponsored global conference on women held in China. His research confirms that the political orientation of the countries where the agencies are based colored their reporting. Although China received a great deal of publicity, the negative comments far outweighed the positive. Inter Press Service clearly headed the coverage of Third World concerns.

I offer my thanks to editor-in-chief Cees Hamelink for inviting me to be the guest editor of this issue, which fitted well with my current engagement as editor of *The Media in Asia*, a book now under preparation for publication by Sage India.

*Shelton A. Gunaratne, Guest Editor*