Chapter 2
Theoretical Foundations of the Study

The background introduction in Chap. 1 suggests that this study must draw on the literature in the following areas: the role of communication in national development, the role of communications in national integration, mass communication and mass mobilisation campaigns in China, and Chinese communication in the market economy era. It may also adapt relevant concepts on nation building, nationalism, and patriotism. The review of the literature under each section concludes with reference to specific applicability to the current study.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Communication in National Development

Definition of the term development has accumulated a voluminous amount of writings. To serve the specific purpose of this study, only a few most relevant ones are to be presented and discussed here. Goulet (1971) gives a broad definition of what the term should mean:

freeing men from nature’s servitude, from economic backwardness and oppressive technological institutions, from unjust class structures and political exploiters, from cultural and psychic alienation—in short, from all of life’s inhumane agencies. (p. 17)

Here development is defined in an active state of affairs, that is, the strife to overcome underdevelopment. Such a continual process of unfolding changes implied in the definition leaves room for varying interpretations depending on the national context. In China today, the greatest majority of the population have either partially achieved or are striving towards these goals. Schramm (1964), in contrast, defines underdevelopment in terms of the incomplete utilisation of resources, be them human, material, or capital. A more recent synthetic redefinition of the
concept is provided by Mowlana (1990), who reiterates the distinction between development and modernisation in the Western sense. He calls for an end to its all-encompassing function in connoting widely different processes such as “modernisation”, “Westernisation”, “industrialisation”, “economic growth”, “political change”, “nation building”, and scores of other economic, political, social, and cultural activities and changes (p. 4). Reviewing the evolutionary path of research in the role of communication in national development in the past four decades, he notes in particular Pye (1966) and Pool (1977)’s distinction between political and economic development. Further, he defines political development as primarily a process of national integration, as movement from less to more national unity. To him, development means more than mere economic growth and the implementation of technological innovations; structural changes are also necessary. He also affirms the sociological view that values and attitudes must change prior to economic growth and development. Current China is undergoing such swift changes in economy that compatible norms and values must be cultivated alongside the development.

After tracing the liberation and emancipation movements in some Third World countries in the 1960s and 1970s, Mowlana (1990) arrives at an eclectic definition of development. Development means “the entire gamut of processes and means by which a social system moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory in some way toward conditions regarded as humanly better” (p. 34).

What is the role of communication in national development? Schramm (1964) proposes three functions for the media in development: watchman function, policy function, and teaching function. More specifically, the mass media can widen horizons, focus people’s attention, raise aspirations, and create a climate for development. In the decision process, they can help indirectly to change strongly held attitudes or valued practices, facilitate interpersonal communication, confer status, broaden the policy dialogue, enforce social norms, form tastes, affect attitudes lightly held, and help in all types of education and training.

An inevitable challenge to communication during the process of development is that the people’s expectation may outgrow the nation’s economic capability. How should the communication apparatus take on the challenge? Lerner (1972) thus summarises the main objectives of development communication: (1) to meet the demand for social justice; (2) to shape expectations in ways that maximise satisfaction and minimise frustrations; (3) to sustain a dynamic equilibrium between the socio-economic and the psychocultural components in a rapidly changing situation.

Synthesising across a wide range of definitions and concepts, Mowlana (1990) focuses on values and belief systems that permeate the developmental process. He proposes that development and communication are not to be separated, but should be taken as interrelated terms, i.e. development is communication and communication is development. Assigning ordinary dictionary definition to communication as “to make known” and development as “to unfold” (p. 35), he defines the phrase development communication in terms of unfolding of knowledge.
Mowlana’s definition seems to defy conventional wisdom about development communication, but the deeper reflections it provokes are revealing. When a nation undergoes changes in domestic conditions and international status during the process of development, which incur changes in people’s lives, does not the changing nation unfold new knowledge about itself? In that sense, development is communication in which both the state and the population participate. Current China offers a social laboratory in which Mowlana’s conception can be illustrated. To refer back to Chap. 1, national campaigns in particular can be regarded as the occasion upon which knowledge about the nation is generated/unfolded.

Setting the research agenda for development communication in China, Chu (1977) emphasises analyses of the institutional, structural changes which the Chinese Communist Party had introduced in China for social and economic development and examination of the roles which a mix of communications channels, including mass media, Party organisations, and formal and informal groups at the grassroots level, had played in the structural change processes. His own work on radical change through communication in China exemplifies his proposal. According to him, development, in any form, requires the unlocking of human energy and creativity in order to utilise available material resources. Based on Lerner’s reasoning that systemic social change will generally involve communication change as the communication structure is an intrinsic part of social structure, he argues that one can hope to change a social system by first changing the patterns of communication. Schramm (1964) maintains that the means and channels of communication can be effectively utilised as instruments to induce planned social change. Pye (1963) would have agreed to this view, for earlier on he had maintained that the structure of a communication system with its more or less well-defined channels is the skeleton of the social body which envelopes it. Understanding the patterns of communication will take us a long way towards understanding a social system.

In short, development means the building of new social institutions, to be supported by new normative behavioural patterns—new values, new beliefs, and new actions. In this sense, development necessitates communication, because it is only through the communication process that the new patterns of interaction can be depicted, elicited, and reinforced (Chu 1977).

New institutions, being a network of new role relations, cannot be established by administrative orders or political means alone. They will become established only through sustained behavioural participation as well as firm value-attachment by the participants involved (Chu 1977). In the case of current China, the increasing structural differentiation accompanying economic reform has been subtly altering the way in which the nation is governed. Some scholars may dispute this argument, but with some concession we have to accept that at least the way has changed in which the Chinese people’s minds and moves are ruled. The new institutions are girded by new norms and ideas adapted for national development. In the general absence of mass political campaigns in current China, events such as the bid for year 2000 Olympics, commemoration of Mao’s 100th anniversary, and celebration of the 50th anniversary of victory over Japanese aggression provide
showcases in which we may examine the role relations between the state, the national media, and the people. The reason is obvious: in such national events, yet to be determined whether they amounted to full-fledged campaigns, all the functional ingredients of the nation were activated in interaction with each other. The media served as one of the most important sites where such interaction took place.

At this point the discussion carries over into a related area: mass participation in development. In fact, as bearers of national identity, both the government and the masses may participate in the unfolding of knowledge about the nation in development, and the mass mobilisation in national development may in one way indicate national integration, which is more of a process than a distinct goal.

2.1.2 Mass Mobilisation and National Integration: The Role of Communications

Mass mobilisation in China for both revolution and development has been a topic of enduring interest, though substantial researches are few in total number (e.g. Bishop 1989; Cell 1977; Chu 1977; Houn 1961; Wou 1994; Yu 1963a).

In his seminal work on communication and radical social transformation in China, Chu (1977) sets forth two preconditions for the initiation of mass participation in the nation’s political and economic processes. First, there must be a change in the major social institutions to remove the old barriers that stand in the way of mass mobilisation. This would require a social structural change. Second, there must be a transformation of the traditional values and beliefs that hold the Chinese back from fully utilising and organising their own resources. This would require a change of cultural ethos, of personality; in short, the creation of the new Chinese Man. To bring about the desired changes, the CCP then employed the instrument of communication—the sharing of messages, sentiments and intent among the people so that they could be aroused to act like one man, in a way desired by the Party authorities. Such practice reflects on the Chinese philosophy of mass mobilisation: to get all people to act alike and work for one goal.

The other facilitators during such process of communication, however, may have changed over time, especially after the inception of China’s economic reform. For example, the small group meetings which had once served as a major channel for applying normative pressure to comply to the Party norms, as well as mutual surveillance in closely-knit interpersonal communication networks in China’s work units typical of the pre-reform era—both institutions have been greatly weakened, and in many instances they are no longer functioning. This observation is but an extension of what was described in Chap. 1, i.e. organisational political communication is no longer an active determinant of the outcome of mass mobilisation or the initiation of mass participation. The swiftly rising media have taken their place to reach the people more directly. Such a new situation contradicts Chu (1977)’s finding more than 20 years ago that the means of
mobilisation involved a high intensity of interpersonal communication. In other words, mobilisation of social pressure from the mass of people through a combination of group communication and coercion, which had helped the communists to topple landlords and businessmen and led to a fundamental change in the social structure decades ago, are no longer the chief means to mobilising participation.

Mass participation in China during the Maoist era was seen as predicated on an unprecedented mass ideological conversion (Yu 1963a), conversion to a unifying ideology which the Chinese believed had the power to determine action. Chu (1977) says that in a communist state solidarity and achievement depend upon ideological unanimity. Such unanimity is in turn the result of mass persuasion by means of indoctrination and propaganda (p. 259).

Yu (1963a)’s description of the sociopsychological condition of the Chinese population at that time may still be valid today. People were then engaged in the baffling process of searching out new relationships with their fellow men and in striving to find their appropriate places in a new society, the dimensions of which they could not yet fully grasp. Today a significant majority of the Chinese population is also confronted with the perplexity in a changeable socio-economic milieu, which is quite beyond the grasp of the individual. If they were compelled to picture themselves as members of a nation which in turn belonged to a wider world of modern nations during the 1950s and 1960s, how are they to picture themselves in relation to China today? Are they to identify themselves with the Party, the state, or the nation? Yu (1963a) argues that the relationship between citizen and polity is never static even in a well-established country, for

individuals are constantly engaged in adjusting and re-evaluating, either restlessly and erratically or gradually and persistently, their sentiments, emotions and judgments about their collective identities (p. 3).

Considered crucial to nation building is the relationship between the institutions of mass communications and the patterns of political change. At the mass level, however, attention should be given to the need for the masses to have a sense of popular involvement, and emotional identification with the national life.

If Yu (1963a)’s prescription is still true that the two fundamental concerns with mass mobilisation are changing attitudes and reducing the gap between the ruling elite and the less modernised masses, mobilising mass participation takes on yet another coloration. Confronted with possible ideological schisms and historical discontinuities, how are the Chinese Party and state to revive a sense of national identity, which requires a feeling of continuity and stability over time? Yu’s analysis designates the politician’s role as articulator of the collective identity. Here we may ask whether the current state leadership will assume such a role.

This question leads to yet other questions. During the pre-reform era, all the Chinese people were guided to live within the same organised totality of beliefs and sentiments within the groups, instead of developing clearly delineated divisions of labour and specific role relations. The Party had fostered the unions, which required individuals in different positions to work together in an undifferentiated manner. The various components of society were not held together primarily
by interdependence, but rather, all depended on the Party structure for direction and guidance through its vast and efficient communication networks (Chu 1977). Today, however, social structural differentiation has come to be recognised along with finer divisions of labour, and as the directives from above lose their absolutist power to a visible extent, what are the propeller of mass mobilisation and the source of national integration?

Schwartz (1994) observes that one answer is to pursue some form of moral education anchored on what is culturally distinctively Chinese. Chu (1977)’s observation that continuous ideological indoctrination could eventually provide a unifying theme to bind the mass of people together seems to be still in vogue with the Chinese state leadership, which has launched the long-term patriotic education programme.

A succinct definition of the parameters of development proposed by Chu (1977) on the empirical basis of the Chinese case may be revealing: “It involves the continuous release and utilisation of human and material resources” (p. 265). The mass energy for pursuit of individualistic ends, long suppressed during the Maoist era, has now been released. How to harness such energy and channel it into national development? The question is frequently driven back to the point of a unifying, cohesive force.

It is imperative to examine whether what had been described and prescribed in the previous literature on communication in China has changed.

As Yu (1963a) argues, the best place to start an investigation of the theory and policy of communication in a communist country is the communist ideology itself. He considers three aspects of the Chinese communist ideology especially important in the realm of communication: class consciousness, the mass line, and unity of theory and practice. In current China, however, class-consciousness as a concept is obsolete, and the endless ideological struggles of the past, often premised on class hatred incited by propaganda, are no longer an institution of governing and mobilising the population. The mass line emphasises the government’s trust in and reliance on the manpower of the masses, and has been a long tradition of the Communist Party since the revolutionary days. Though it is still an important ingredient of the Party and the state’s policies, mass mobilisation tends to be pursued on a different basis, without an appeal against an external enemy such as imperialism or a domestic class enemy. As for the unity of theory and practice, it in essence refers to the congruence and integration between the Party’s guiding ideology and its policies.

The purpose of propaganda has also shifted from its past goal to “awaken, heighten, and sharpen the class consciousness of the masses” (Yu 1963a, p. 261) to the contemporary emphasis on educating the population with the economic construction goal of the nation and fuelling their positive enthusiasm towards such goals (Chu 1994). One most recent statement to that effect was made by delegates to the CCP’s 15th National Congress in September 1997.

Not only have the goals and conditions for mass mobilisation changed in China, but also changed are the targets of such mobilising efforts—a significant
segment of the population had not been previously exposed to such campaigns or the ideologies they sought to promote. And peasants, who used to be the main targets of mobilisation for the sake of nation building decades ago (Liu 1971), have become mainly the object of the diffusion of scientific technology. Today, even farmers may not subscribe to ideological study for study’s sake. They regard the urge to feed and prosper themselves as their top priority. Moreover, with the decentralisation of state leadership, the power to plan and implement mobilisation campaigns may no longer totally reside with the central government. Further, the openness of a market economy system is bound to have its share of influence on the media system (Chu 1994), which has now more than one master: besides influence from the state government, there is the market force whose dictate they must heed (Hao and Huang 1996). This last point has captured only initial investigation by communication scholars, and hence the current study has a chance to further explore it.

By Liu (1971)’s definition, national integration in the 1960s encompassed the process of integrating the individual into the nation’s political process, and integrating media content and structure with the political structure. Our current concern with national integration refers to mass concertedness in action, historical continuity in the nation’s guiding ideology and policy, and the compatibility between the ideological and material/pragmatic realms of national life.

The idea of national integration and the idea of mass mobilisation converge on one point, i.e. participation, or involving the largest possible number of people in a national process by means of communication. Mobilisation in its original sense referred mainly to marshalling manpower and material resources and bringing them together against adversities in war times. In the current Chinese context, greater emphasis of mobilisation is placed on the spiritual dimension, which requires the mobilisation of symbolic resources such as vivid images signifying the nation, in order to summon the human resources to best utilise the potential of the nation’s material resources.

Chu (1977) maintains that the more people are allowed to participate in the process of change, through extensive communication, the less likely the course of development will be disruptive to the society as a whole. The lack of grassroots members’ demand for changes in their positions in the overall social structure during the Maoist era was ascribed to a sense of participation and a feeling of national purpose. Of course, what is not to be neglected is the capacity of the Chinese people for tolerance and patience even in situations of severe stress. But has this also been changed under the new economic circumstances? Chu and Ju (1993) attribute such tolerance partly to structural constraints in the traditional Chinese society, and such propensity is now called into question as the norms and values once dearly upheld are changing.

Given the perplexities arising from the discontinuity in belief and behavioural patterns identified over the past decades, it becomes imperative to examine whether and how communication figures into the creation of a nationally unifying spiritual force.
2.1.3 Mass Campaigns—an Old Topic, a New Perspective

In the beginning of the 1970s, for social scientists China offered something like a laboratory test of the limits of what propaganda could do (Liu 1971). This statement still holds water today. The changes throughout the Chinese society today are of no less consequence than those 30 years ago. What is sharply different about the nation is the current absence of an orthodox unifying ideology and the removal of ideological coercion. Coercion used to come in package with mass persuasion.

Propaganda research, which flourished after World War I, has not explained the frustration of propagandists who have attempted to educate for good causes (Baruch 1976; Clews 1964). It is a challenge to as well as an opportunity for this study.

Liu (1971) observes that Chinese bureaucrats had limited faith in mass persuasion, and they believed instead that a long period of education was needed to cultivate a degree of intellectual sophistication in the people. This belief stemmed from the Maoist philosophy that the mass media, coupled with grassroots oral participation, could transform the Chinese population. Today, the traditional propaganda model is pronounced obsolete by some scholars (Yu and Huang 1996), who base their observation on grounds that a market economy precludes the past closed-nation environment in which top-down communication was the one line of information traffic that could dominate the nation. These claims are theoretically grounded, but campaigns that involve a significant amount of communication are the real solid ground on which such claims can be re-examined.

So far the post-Mao Chinese leadership has not presented any equally canonical elaboration on mass propaganda. But there are apparent changes in practice, in that the incessant study meetings, discussion groups, little red books, and blaring loudspeakers used by Maoist propagandists to change the population are no longer in use. If past propaganda campaigns built around interpersonal communication and small-group processes were successful mainly because there was an inadequate media structure for national communication (Liu 1971), the effect of national campaigns today remains to be examined, at a time when media abound.

Liu (1971) interprets the hidden motive for Maoist reliance on propaganda as partly an attempt to cope with a real problem under circumstances where other resources were lacking. He observes that the real problem was the national integration of a backward country almost totally lacking the prerequisite conditions for the creation of a nation, e.g. a common language, adequate roads, literate people, effectively organised bureaucracy, and a media system. All these have changed to varied extents since Liu’s seminal work was written. The full-fledged media structure which was then absent is now established (Lee 1994).

Yu (1963a) sees mass mobilisation campaigns as processes of mass persuasion, while Liu (1971) maintains that to some degree such mass persuasion had served to create national consciousness, a must towards national integration. Liu’s (1971) book examines the organisation and conduct of agitation and propaganda in China, both in its normal bureaucratic manifestations and as it worked during the mass
One of Liu (1971)’s arguments is noteworthy in reflection on China’s current situation. He argues that when political control over the country was no longer in danger, the government might decide on long-term integration strategy such as fostering identification instead of penetrating the population through coercive means. If so, what should be the integrating strategy for China today?

The main thesis in Liu (1971)’s work is very important. Citing the Western experience as an example, he observes that the media were to reinforce the existing national unification and identity created originally by a social infrastructure. Although the mass media in China helped the communist regime extend its centralisation over widespread regions and disseminate some basic facts about its official ideology, the media did not succeed in creating fundamental national integration because of China’s economic underdevelopment and political instability. In short, the media cannot create national integration by themselves.

Now we reach the concern with the concrete strategies of mass mobilisation campaigns. In the past, the media were used to play upon the symbol of a threatening foreign enemy—U.S. imperialism, and they focused popular attention on the excitement of developing China. Does this practice remain the same? The end result was a much-enhanced national awareness (King 1966; Liu 1971), and it helped to mobilise the people for being integrated into new institutions. National identity, once activated through campaigns, had its own “momentum and inertia” (Liu 1971, p. 177).

Next come studies on the objective, planning, implementation, and effects. Past campaigns were launched by the CCP to mobilise the Chinese people to participate in its political and economic programmes. Such a mass campaign usually consisted of a series of organised, planned actions for a particular purpose. An ad hoc command organisation was usually created for each campaign, and a large number of people were mobilised to engage in highly visible, intensive, and concentrated activities (Liu 1971; Cell 1983). To some degree all campaigns had the function of creating a new value system. As for the stages of the campaign, it went from decision—announcement—transmission—fermentation—legitimation—review (Liu 1971). This was true of the last large-scale mass campaign appealing to people’s patriotic sentiments during the pre-reform era that followed the crisis incurred by the failure of the Great Leap Forward, for the government was attempting to stabilise the population (Liu 1971).

As for the effects of past campaigns and why they were effective, the explanations offered by Liu (1971) included the inadequacy of the mass media, the abundance of popular enthusiasm, and the absence of other political, economic, and cultural institutions that would enable the people to participate in the new nation. In other words, mass campaigns were the main avenue by which people could participate in the nation. Today, however, multitudes of other media are competing with mass campaigns as channels of information, possibly with rivalling messages. This may affect the effects of the campaigns.
Liu (1971) thus captures the long-term effects of mass campaigns: disseminating a mass political language, creating a mass experience of organisation and coordinated action, the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialisation and behaviour. While this study does not surmise on the long-term effects of the campaigns studied, past conclusions still help to shed light on current perceptions of effects.

We may borrow, however, Cell (1977)’s definition of mass mobilisation campaigns in China as an organised mobilisation of collective action aimed at transforming thought patterns, class/power relationships, and/or economic institutions and productivity. He stresses that such campaigns were part and parcel of China’s development strategy, and that at the core of China’s developmental goals was the commitment to decreasing inequality. This invites second thought on the current situation, when the explicit Party policy under Deng Xiaoping’s guideline is to prosper part of the population first, which inevitably widens the gap of inequality.

This study looks into the extent to which national events might serve the function of a temporary “equaliser” that each individual feels equally related to the nation.

2.2 Theoretical Horizons of the Study

2.2.1 An Overview of Prospect

A major assumption underlying the above reviewed literature is that in order to spiritually integrate a nation for fulfilment of a development goal, mass mobilisation is a must.

Writings on nation building, mass mobilisation, and communication for national development have been drawn upon as conceptual resources for possible explanations of China’s effort at national integration, contributing to the construction of a new or refined perspective of the role of communication in national integration. Fundamental definitions such as nation, patriotism, integration will be derived from analysis of empirical data, modifying the commonsensical version presented in the preceding chapter.

A primary argument that serves as the peg of this study is that at a time when the once popular regard for ideologies is completely giving way to pursuit of material gains, national integration can no longer be imposed through the use of ideological pressure. It has to be achieved on different grounds and levels, mostly in the spiritual spheres of national life. When coercive measures have fallen out of public favour, communication will logically play a more important role in national integration. This study seeks to capture and picture that role in the context of national campaigns.

To buttress this argument, a reference should be made to the pre-1949 Communist revolution era when the ideal of emancipating the masses from
economic oppression was the fuel with which the propaganda machinery charged the population to mobilise them for united action against the foe of the Communist Party. Surely, the word ideal invites multiple definitions, but it may well be more revealing to view it in relation to ideology and image. Following the distinction between “ideal” and “image” made by Boorstin (1961) in his classic work on the American dream, “ideal” in the Chinese revolution referred to a lofty goal presumed for the benefit of the largest number of people, i.e. providing for the material welfare of the masses. Before 1949, it was literally an ideal, in that it had not yet been realised, which the Communist propagandists held up to encourage the people into contributing to the revolution by striving for the ideal.

Following the founding of the People’s Republic, endless political struggles on ideological grounds started. During the ensuing three decades, an incessant supply of ideologies and conflicts thereof was fed to the population, engaging the people in ideological warfare. Was mass mobilisation attempted and achieved in this period? Theoretically, it is easy to distinguish this period from the pre-1949 period. Excitation is a term that comes closer to representing the state of mass mobilisation at that time. That is to say, an effect of propaganda and agitation was to keep the entire population in an excited state, which logically made the thoughts and emotions of the people toward the government and the Party manifest in the turbulent wave of affairs, readily discernible by the leaders.

Evidently, during the two eras captured in the above paragraphs, there was little expressed concern on the part of the propagandists with what was “China”, or a sense of national identity independent of political and ideological identity. Being socialist seemed more important than being “Chinese”. It is perhaps fair to say that the primary source of each Chinese individual’s identity was ideological rather than cultural. For example, most Chinese who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s would easily recall that their identity was either “successors to the Communist cause” or “Chairman Mao’s good children”, etc., rather than “Chinese” (e.g. Wilson et al. 1979). As for the matter of national image, the government was more deeply entrenched in the war against Western national images, e.g. labelling the Western nations “capitalistic” or “imperialistic”. There is little empirical evidence systematically documented thus far showing in what ways China actively sought to project its own national image, or identity, for that matter.

A possible unintended finding of this study is whether or not the chief thrust of the patriotic education campaign under way since the 1990s can be categorised as ideal-oriented or ideologically charged or image-based or overlaps of more than one of these. In other words, after the failing of obsolete ideologies in China, which had been featured in the pre-reform political campaigns, what kind of propaganda model or machinery works at present—if there are any? This is a reflective application of Yu (1963a)’s observation that the best starting point for analysing a communication system is the ideology of the larger system.

The time period selected for the main part of the study is 1993–1995, the first three years after China’s most recent policy of constructing a socialist market went into effect. Disintegrative factors had always been at work through the fibres of the Chinese society at all times in history (Chu and Hsu 1983; Chu and Ju 1993).
But the spiritually disintegrative forces may gather momentum when the country embarks itself on the new reform and open policies initiated in late 1978 which culminated into the inception of a national market economy in early 1993 (Shih 1995), especially in an ideological vacuum. Overall, past analyses and discussion provide a good historical perspective and focus more on the structural breakdowns in the society, communication failure between the centre and the periphery of the nation, and conflict resolution. But the consistent and persistent re-integration of the Chinese society following each upheaval in history was ascribed to China’s enduring cultural tradition, a thesis which has only recently been challenged by Chu and Ju (1993) in their seminal work on communication and cultural disintegration in contemporary China.

The gradual erosion of China’s cultural tradition as an integrative factor had been the topic of investigation done by Chu and Ju (1993), whose work features the role of the media. Few people could dispute the general observation that throughout its long history China has gone through cycles of integration and disintegration. The key question lies in how these two key concepts have been defined and how they should be redefined. This study does not demand a full-length tour back into history. As far as the post-1949 period is concerned, communication as a means of national integration was structurally examined by Liu (1971) within the early part of the Cultural Revolution time frame. Since 1949, there has been an ongoing clash between socialist ideology and China’s cultural tradition—in the political arena (Shih 1995), though people who had lived through the Maoist era would say that the socialist ideology dominated all the time. Accepting these arguments, it may be quite valid to see whether recent development indicates any effort on the part of the government or desire from the people to integrate socialist ideology (refined in a market context) with certain adaptable values and virtues of China’s cultural tradition. The convergence of these two may be something akin to what is called China’s national soul. If there were any distinct effort, most likely it will be reflected in the media.

Defining national integration in a spiritual sense leads to reflection on the people’s need for a new cognitive order to suit the new social context. In an age of turbulence, changes in social, political, and economic parameters require us to reorganise our cognitive order to appreciate the bewildering changes and adapt to them (Roseneau 1990). Mass communication might be used to organise such an “order”, i.e. provide new reference frames within which the people should orient themselves in relation to fellow citizens, to the nation, to the government, to the nation’s cultural tradition, and to history. In the last analysis, it is a matter of letting each individual find his place in the nation building process by participating in mass action.

As was briefly mentioned above, in answering these questions, new light may be shed on the conventional definitions of ideology, especially when the word is used with derogative connotations to refer to Communist China. Existing definitions of ideology as a dominant form of understanding the world (Adams 1989; Althusser 1984; Cormack 1995; Mannheim 1936), though accepted as a convenient conceptual tool, may prove inadequate for the current Chinese context, in
which it might find new ramifications, especially if re-examined alongside concepts such as ideal and image.

The impetuosity of a fully unleashed market force, which exerts itself upon individuals and institutions, inevitably drives them to transient pursuits of material gains. While such gains may seem desirable at the time, in the long run their pursuit contributes negatively to national stability, for they tend to shade people’s eyes from envisioning their longer and larger mission. In other words, short-term goals may divorce the people of a nation from a longer historical vision.

Finally, the spiritual identity of individual citizens in relation to the nation may be in crisis, owing in part to the major change in the relationship between the individual, institution, and the state. Just what is “China” and what does it mean to be a “Chinese”? Answers to these questions may be constructed through the media in national events.

Following are the oft-quoted guidelines given by Jiang Zemin for media message producers whom the CP and national government regard as the main task force in the creation of a cohesive force. It has become a slogan, “Equip the people with scientific theories, guide them with correct opinions, mould them with lofty spirits, and encourage them with high-quality works”. It reflects the arty’s belief that correct theory precedes correct practice.

Apparently, no sensible governors of a developing nation would like to achieve economic success at the cost of spiritual advancement of the population. The case of China is somewhat unique in that the decades preceding economic reform had witnessed ideological asceticism when everything in life was explained in ideological terms, and when any material pursuit was not only discouraged but also denounced. The whole nation was integrated under the imposition of an ideological force. Today, in the absence of such a force, how to keep the people of a nation spiritually united? To what measure? For what purpose? These are some of the crucial questions confronting the Chinese government as well as students in various disciplines of social sciences.

From the preceding analysis of writings done by other scholars a consensus seems to emerge that the primary strategy for integrating a nation is cultivating a national identity (cf. Lim 1990). But China researchers have thus far only scratched the surface of this concept (Fitzgerald 1994; Lin 1994; Su 1994). Their emphasis is mainly on the issue of state versus society, and centre versus periphery. This study seeks to conceptualise it in terms of the interplay between the identity of individuals and that of their nation. Such interplay tends to be manifest in national events and/or campaigns.

2.2.2 Further Elaboration on Theoretical Significance of the Study

As was stated above, the study draws upon several strands of writings. Among them, theories of development communication have not been actively applied
to the Chinese case. One major reason is that for decades past China had been regarded as a Communist country and not part of the developing world. Therefore, it is taken for granted that much existing research on one or another aspect of China, especially research done by Westerners, had tended to proceed with such a fixed conception of China. It is only in very recent years that the Chinese government has openly branded China as the “largest developing country” in the world, and pronounced national economic development as its Number One goal. The preceding portion of the study comes in part from practical issues demanding attention, while the following discussion will suggest the theoretical grounds for such research questions.

Underlying the Chinese government’s strategies in creating a cohesive force is the following assumption: efforts to improve the society should begin with improving each individual’s thinking and behaviour. This is contrary to Schramm’s classic proposition that the Marxian theory upheld by the Chinese government advocates the position of improving individual man by improving the entire society (Siebert 1956). It is more revealing to see these two as intertwining processes. However, this claim needs to be substantiated with the data to be analysed in the following chapters.

Following the traditional propaganda model, Liu (1971) describes the integration between media structures and government structure, between media content and national politics. Implied but not explicitly stated in his typology is that the various media of communication were just one of the extended arms of the central government reaching down to the grassroots levels to keep them under control. Such integration was a vertical process imposed through propaganda campaigns coupled with organisational pressure. Today, while presumably contributing to national integration, could it be that the media might be somewhat “disintegrated” from the state?

Regarding the function of the national media, other writings on communication in China either take the structural approach or provide a basically historical sketch of the media as an instrument of the government (Chang 1989; Yu 1990). Some scholars maintain that ideologically, the CP still sees mass media as tools in propagating socialist ideals and in executing Party policies (Chu 1994).

Conspicuously missing from the existing body of literature on communication in China are studies of mass mobilisation campaigns in the post-1978 history. Such campaigns used to be the concerns of political scientists in Chinese studies (e.g. Cell 1977; Yu 1963b). By their standards, political campaigns prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s had vanished from the Chinese socio-political scene since the end of the 1970s.

The anti-spiritual pollution campaign in 1983 and anti-bourgeois liberalisation campaign in 1987 are not regarded as genuine campaigns that resembled the earlier ones in scale or nature.

At any rate, so far many outstanding campaigns in China’s contemporary history had been campaigns against, rather than campaigns for, e.g. the Five-anti Campaign in the early 1950s and the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s. The recently launched patriotic education campaign fits well into the latter designation.
In the absence of pressing external threat, such as that posed by imperialism in the past, what is the main source of appeal for mobilising the population into united action? This is a rephrasing of the question regarding the relationship between campaigns and national integration.

The functions performed by mass mobilisation campaigns received cursory attention from Cell (1977) in his study of campaigns. Among them one function not emphasised was the knowledge generating and knowledge-propagating function of the campaign processes per se. Here the term knowledge comes into play.

Then we touch on the relevant literature on philosophies of knowledge. A scholar in Chinese thought offers us a scheme for categorising human knowledge by way of acquisition: hearing (including all direct forms of acquisition, such as listening and reading), inference, and experience (Mote 1989). It is the discipline bias of students in communication to focus on knowledge acquired through “hearing”, and that through the mass media. But how does this type of knowledge or way of knowing weigh against knowledge acquired through experience and inference? Of particular relevance to the current Chinese context is that a good segment of the population had previously been indoctrinated with sets of ideologies that completely contradict the current situation in all spheres of national and individual lives and their theoretical legitimisation. Festinger (1957) would have termed it cognitive dissonance, a theory too deeply rooted in the psychology of the individual to be applied wholly to a national scale. In the case of China today, given the plurality in the channels of information available to most people, what the state tells them may contradict what they have experienced in personal life and work, as well as their personal inferences and judgements. In the pre-reform era, ideological coercion dominated over the expression of such contradiction and made all act alike. What about today?

Mass mobilisation campaigns are one way of reducing dissonance between knowledge acquired through different ways. By involving the population in a national event or events and directing their attention to a national goal, campaigns may succeed in this regard. However, this observation is yet to be tested in the cases.

This point naturally carries the line of reasoning into the next related area of literature: development communication. Its focus has been mostly on the role of communication in innovation diffusion and development policy propagation (Mowlana 1990). Congruence between an individual’s beliefs and those of the larger environment which demand him to act in certain ways will bring out his best in action. Therefore, the main task for development communication confronting the Chinese government at present is to bring about a thorough change in people’s values and ideas to make them congruent with the demands of market economy. Besides school education and organisational communication, the media in the milieu of national campaigns have a role to play in this process.

So far research on communication and development in China has focused on mass persuasion (Yu 1963a) and socialisation of the minds (Houn 1961). The studies done in the pre-reform period tended to stress the relation between a given communication medium or a given innovation and a specific goal of development.
More recently, Liu (1992) thus expounded on the case of China: in the long run, the mass media contribute to creating and reinforcing extended identification among a people. In the short run, they transmit knowledge, inform people about new opportunities, and create a social or political climate.

By attempting to spiritually unify the population for national action, sentiment, or memory, the government through the media may to some extent fulfil the above objectives, thus maintaining social stability in swift economic changes.

Although the Chinese leaders in directing the nation towards a brand new course of market economy may not be thinking in exact terms as the above, their goals set for communication cannot be much deviant from these. This observation is supported by Lee (1994) in his study on the role of media in national development, which showed that TV can serve an integrative function by contributing to national stability, a most important factor for economic growth (Lewis 1988).

Regarding the issue of national identity, Liu (1971) only touches upon "identification between the people and the government" (p. 84). Here a question arises as to with what aspect of the government the people identify. Further, identifying with the government may not be equated with identifying with the nation.

Definitions of national identity are as numerous as the number of scholars who have expounded upon this concept. Risking over-simplification, this study proposes that national identity consists of the following three elements—or a new ism: what we are (identity), what we can do (strength), and what we must do (mission) as a nation. Further, such knowledge can be effectively generated and propagated through national education campaigns. More specifically, by involving the entire population in an action such as the Bid for Year 2000 Olympics, in commemoration of the late Chairman Mao, and in celebrating the 50th anniversary of victory over Japanese aggression, the campaigns in effect distribute knowledge about the i-s-m and intensifies the public awareness of such knowledge.

To reiterate, this is a campaign study. The existing literature is scanty on campaigns in China with a distinct emphasis on communication. Two relatively substantial studies were done by Yu (1963a) and Cell (1977). According to Cell, in the 1970s the goal for mass campaigns was to get everyone to think and work in terms of the collective whole, to transform the society from a position of individual thinking and self-advancement to one in which all serve the socialist whole. Mass mobilisation was seen as a primary means for policy implementation.

Yu (1963a) categorises the campaigns in China as either economic, ideological, or struggle. The first type was constructive in its intent to speed up development. The second type served mainly the purpose of transforming thought patterns, while the third type had as its goal to eradicate the enemies. Are these categories still valid and applicable to today’s cases? The answer is likely to be no. The ideological tension in the 1950s–1970s, which constituted the chief basis for campaigns, no longer exists. That means the soul of national drama—conflicts, is no longer as easy to grasp. However, Chap. 1 outlined the major conflicting forces that might be a threat to the spiritual oneness of China during its market economy era, and in conclusions based on case analyses we shall see whether and to what extent the campaigns resolved or dissolved or alleviated such conflicts.
Liu (1971) concludes that communication did contribute to national integration, while Cell (1977) observes that most campaigns he studied achieved their purposes. But there is a lack of an operational definition of nation (in fact no definition) that encompasses the various structural components of the nation such as the Party, the government, the military, and the people. In addition, the variable nature of the concept of national integration, which carries with it different goals and tasks during different eras, is also subject to examination on the grounds provided by these three cases. The next chapter deals with how this study was conducted and what to expect of its outcome.

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