The South Korean media consist of several different types of public communication of news: television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines, and Internet-based Web sites.

Modern Korean journalism began after the opening of Korea in late 19th century. The Korean press had a strong reformist and nationalistic flavour from the beginning, but faced efforts at political control or outright censorship during most of the 20th century.

History

Colonial period (1910–1945)

When the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty was signed in 1910, the Governor-General of Korea assumed direct control of the press along with other public institutions. Following the March 1st Movement in 1919, the colonial government loosened their overt control over cultural activities and permitted several Korean newspapers to function while maintaining some behind-the-scenes direction over politically sensitive topics.

During the 1920s, Korean vernacular newspapers, such as Donga Ilbo, and intellectual journals such as Kaebokyok (Creation), conducted running skirmishes with Japanese censors. Colonial authorities prohibited sales of individual issues on hundreds of occasions between 1926 and 1932. World War II mobilisation in the ensuing years ended any resemblance of autonomy for the Korean press; all Korean-language publications were outlawed in 1941.

After World War II (1945-1990)

Following the period of 1945 to 1948, which saw a burgeoning of newspapers and periodicals of every description as well as occasional censorship of the media, almost all subsequent South Korean governments have at times attempted to control the media.

Syngman Rhee's government continued the military government's Ordinance Number Eighty-Eight, which outlawed leftist newspapers. Rhee also closed moderate newspapers and arrested reporters and publishers on numerous occasions between 1948 and 1960. On taking power in 1961, Park Chung Hee's Supreme Council for National Reconstruction closed all but fifteen of Seoul's 64 daily newspapers and refused to register a comparable percentage of the country's news services, weeklies, and monthly publications while using its own radio and news agencies to promote its official line. The Park government also used the Press Ethics Commission Law of 1964 and, after 1972, emergency decrees that penalised criticism of the government to keep the media in line. In 1974, the government ordered a number of journalists fired and used the KCIA to force Dong-a Ilbo to stop its reporting on popular opposition to the Park government by intimidating the paper's advertisers.

During the Park and the subsequent Chun Doo Hwan administrations, the government exercised considerable control and surveillance over the media through the comprehensive National Security Act. In late 1980, the Chun government established more thorough control of the news media than had existed in the South Korea since the Korean War. Independent news agencies were absorbed into a single state-run agency, numerous provincial newspapers were closed, central newspapers were forbidden to station correspondents in provincial cities, the Christian Broadcasting System network was forbidden to provide news coverage, and two
independent broadcasting companies were absorbed into the state-run Korean Broadcasting System (KBS). In addition, the Defense Security Command, then commanded by Roh Tae Woo, and the Ministry of Culture and Information ordered hundreds of South Korean journalists fired and banned from newspaper writing or editing. The Basic Press Act of December 1980 was the legal capstone of Chun's system of media control and provided for censorship and control of newspapers, periodicals, and broadcast media. It also set the professional qualifications for journalists. Media censorship was coordinated with intelligence officials, representatives of various government agencies, and the presidential staff by the Office of Public Information Policy within the Ministry of Culture and Information using daily "reporting guidelines" sent to newspaper editors. The guidelines dealt exhaustively with questions of emphasis, topics to be covered or avoided, the use of government press releases, and even the size of headlines. Enforcement methods ranged from telephone calls to editors to more serious forms of intimidation, including interrogations and beatings by police. One former Ministry of Culture and Information official told a National Assembly hearing in 1988 that compliance during his tenure from 1980 to 1982 reached about 70 per cent.

By the mid-1980s, censorship of print and broadcast media had become one of the most widely and publicly criticised practices of the Chun government. Even the government-controlled Yonhap News Agency noted in 1989 that "TV companies, scarcely worse than other media, were the main target of bitter public criticism for their distorted reporting for the government in the early 1980s." Editorials called for abolition of the Basic Press Act and related practices, a bill was unsuccessfully introduced in the National Assembly to the same end, and a public campaign to withhold compulsory viewers' fees in protest against censorship by the KBS network received widespread press attention. By the summer of 1986, even the ruling party was responding to public opinion.

The political liberalization of the late 1980s brought a loosening of press restraints and a new generation of journalists more willing to investigate sensitive subjects, such as the May 1980 Gwangju massacre. Roh's eight-point declaration of June 29, 1987, provided for "a free press, including allowing newspapers to base correspondents in provincial cities and withdrawing security officials from newspaper offices." The South Korean media began a rapid expansion. Seoul papers expanded their coverage and resumed the practice of stationing correspondents in provincial cities. Although temporarily still under the management of a former Blue House press spokesman, the MBC television network, a commercial network that had been under control of the state-managed KBS since 1980, resumed independent broadcasting. The number of radio broadcast stations grew from 74 in 1985 to 111 (including both AM and FM stations) by late 1988 and 125 by late 1989. The number of periodicals rose as the government removed restrictions on the publishing industry.

There also were qualitative changes in the South Korean media. The Christian Broadcasting System, a radio network, again began to broadcast news as well as religious programming in 1987. In the same year, the government partially lifted a long-standing ban on the works of North Korean artists and musicians, many of whom were of South Korean origin. A newspaper run by dissident journalists began publication in 1988. A number of other new dailies also appeared in 1988. Many of the new weekly and monthly periodicals bypassed the higher profits of the traditional general circulation magazines to provide careful analyses of political, economic, and national security affairs to smaller, specialised audiences. Observers noted a dramatic increase in press coverage of previously taboo subjects such as political-military relations, factions within the military, the role of security agencies in politics, and the activities of
dissident organisations. Opinion polls dealing with these and other sensitive issues also began to appear with increasing regularity. Journalists at several of the Seoul dailies organised trade unions in late 1987 and early 1988 and began to press for editorial autonomy and a greater role in newspaper management.

In 1989 South Korea's four largest dailies, Hankook Ilbo, Joongang Ilbo, Chosun Ilbo, and Donga Ilbo, had a combined circulation of more than 6.5 million. The anti-establishment The Hankyoreh, had 450,000 readers–less than the major dailies or smaller papers like Kyonghan Shinmun or Seoul Shinmun, but larger than four more specialised economic dailies. All the major dailies were privately owned, except for the government-controlled Hankook Ilbo. Several other daily publications had specialised readerships among sport fans and youth. Two English-language newspapers, the government-subsidised Korea Herald and the Korea Times, which was affiliated with the independent Soul simmun, were widely read by foreign embassies and businesses. A Chinese-language daily served South Korea's small Chinese population.

The Yonhap News Agency provided domestic and foreign news to government agencies, newspapers, and broadcasters. Yonhap also provided news on South Korean developments in English by computerised transmission via the Asia-Pacific News Network. Additional links with world media were facilitated by four satellite link stations. The International Broadcast Centre established in June 1988 served some 10,000 broadcasters for the 1988 Seoul Olympics. The government's KBS radio network broadcast overseas in twelve languages. Two private radio networks, the Asia Broadcasting Company and Far East Broadcasting Company, served a wide regional audience that included the Soviet Far East, China, and Japan.

The South Korean government also supported Naewoe Press, which dealt solely with North Korean affairs. Originally a propaganda vehicle that followed the government line on unification policy issues, Naewoe Press became increasingly objective and moderate in tone in the mid-1980s in interpreting political, social, and economic developments in North Korea. Vantage Point, an English-language publication of Naewoe Press, provided in-depth studies of North Korean social, economic, and political developments.

Except for two newspapers (one in Korean and one in English) that the government owned or controlled and the state television network, ownership of the media was for the most part distinct from political or economic power. One exception was the conservative daily, Joongang Ilbo. Under the close oversight of its owner, the late Samsung Group founder and multimillionaire Lee Pyong-chol, the paper and its affiliated TBC television network generally supported the Park government during the 1970s. Its relations with the government became strained after 1980, however, when Chun Doo Hwan forced TBC to merge with KBS. A journalists' strike at Joongang Ilbo in 1989, in one of many similar incidents at the major South Korean newspapers, won even greater management and editorial independence.

Most of South Korea's major newspapers derived their financial support from advertising and from their affiliation with major publishing houses. The Donga Press, for example, published not only the prestigious daily Donga Ilbo, but also a variety of other periodicals, including a newspaper for children, the general circulation monthly Shin Donga, a women's magazine, and specialized reference books and magazines for students. Throughout the post-war period, the Donga Ilbo has been noted for its opposition sympathies.
South Korea's principal anti-establishment newspaper, The Hankyoreh[2], began publication in May 1988. It was founded by dissident journalists who were purged by the government in the early 1970s or in 1980; many of the paper's reporters and editorial staff left positions on mainstream newspapers to join the new venture. The structure and approach of the paper reflected the founders' view that in the past the South Korean news media had been too easily co-opted by the government. The paper had a human rights department as well as a mass media department to keep an eye on the government's press policy and to critique the ideological and political biases of other newspapers. The paper's nationalism and interest in national reunification were symbolically represented in the logo, which depicted Lake Cheonji at the peak of Baekdu Mountain in North Korea; in the exclusive use of the Korean alphabet; and in the type font in which the paper's name was printed, which dated from a famous Korean publication of the eighteenth century, before the country became divided. The paper was printed horizontally, rather than vertically like other Seoul dailies. In other innovations, The Hankyoreh relied on sales revenues, private contributions, and the sale of stock, rather than advertising from major corporations, in line with its claim to be “the first newspaper in the world truly independent of political power and large capital.” The newspaper came under increasing government pressures in 1989.

South Korea also had extensive and well-developed visual media. The first Korean film was produced in 1919, and cinemas subsequently were built in the larger cities. The result of the spread of television sets and radios was the dissemination of a homogenised popular culture and the impingement of urban values on rural communities.

Current status (1990–today)

After decades of state control and heavy censorship, the South Korean press (in print, on television, and online) is experiencing a period of relative freedom. However, the repressive Basic Press Law was repealed in 1987, and since 1990 the television market has expanded significantly. Whereas in 1980 there were only 28 national newspapers, today there are 122. In 2002, satellite broadcasting brought multi-channel commercial television to homes across South Korea. According to most outside observers, political discourse is unrestricted in South Korea; however, persistent concerns are worth noting. The National Security Law allows the government to limit the expression of ideas deemed pro-North Korean or communist; broad interpretations of this statute place a chill on peaceful dissent. In addition, in 2003, President Roh Moo-Hyun brought a libel suit against four of the major national newspapers, and the government has stated that editorials are subject to legal action if they are found to contain falsehoods. Outside observers have criticised pressure tactics used by both the South Korean government and the business community to influence reporting.

Major newspapers include Chosun Ilbo, Donga Ilbo, Joongang Ilbo, and Hankook Ilbo, all published in Seoul. The five nationwide television networks are KBS-1 and KBS-2 (public broadcast), MBC (run as a public organization), EBS (state-funded), and SBS (a commercial broadcaster). Some 70 percent of South Korean households have broadband Internet access, and the online media marketplace is growing rapidly. Popular news Web sites (such as OhMyNews.com) register as many as 15 million visits per day.[1]

Today, much of the news in South Korea is delivered through electronic means and the country is at the leading edge of the digital revolution and a trailblazer for high-speed and wireless internet services.[2]
Print media
Book

Baegunhwasang Chorokbuljo Jikjisimcheyojeol (Jikji, Anthology Teachings of Zen Buddhist Priests) is the world's oldest extant movable metal print book. It was published in 1377 (Goryeo Dynasty), 78 years prior to Johannes Gutenberg's "42-Line Bible" printed during the years 1452-1455.[3] In 1446, 'Hunminjeongeum' was published by Sejong, fourth king of 'Joseon Dynasty' and scholars of 'Jiphyunjeon'. This text describes the promulgation of 'Hangul', which is the basis for the modern native Korean alphabet. It is constructed in two parts: 'Hunminjeongeum Yeibon'(the body) and 'Hunminjeongeum Haerebon'(explanations). In the introduction King Sejong revealed that the purpose of creating the Hunminjeongeum. In 1997, it was inscribed into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.[4]

Newspaper
Published in Late-Chosun, Hansung Sunbo was the first modern newspaper in Korea. It was published in Bakmunkuk which was an official printing office. It was written in Hanja and published every 10 days. Hansung Sunbo carried both domestic and foreign news and it had enlightened opinions. The Independent was the first newspaper written in Korean, and the first private newspaper. Seo Jae-Pil published it in two version: Korean Hangul and English. The Independent made an effort to enlighten people and denounce absurd Chosun officers. After the 1980s, newspapers received greater freedom, after The Press Forceful Merge became invalid. Nowadays, Chosun Ilbo, Dong-A Ilbo, and Jung-Ang Ilbo are the major newspapers, which have conservative ideals; Hankook Ilbo is moderate; Kyunghyang Shinmun and The Hankyoreh are the major newspapers which hold liberal ideals. In South Korea, conservative newspapers are more widely read. Maeil Business Newspaper and Korea Economic Daily are the major business newspapers.
In South Korea, like many other countries, newspaper subscribers are decreasing.

Electronic media
Radio
The first radio broadcasting was JODK by 'Kyungsung Broadcasting' in 1927. Some people regard HLKA by 'Korean Broadcasting system' in 1947 as the first radio broadcasting in Korea. Since 2003, DAB(Digital Audio Broadcasting) or DAR(Digital Audio Radio) services have been used.[5]

Channels
As standard radio stations, there are KBS, MBC, SBS, EBS.


MBC
In Korea, MBC Radio is the most popular in general because there are several long-running programs. MBC operates 2 channels: FM4U and Standard FM. 'Cho Yeong-Nam & Choi Yu-ra's Radio Golden Age' is the most famous program which provides funny stories and K-pop music.

SBS
SBS also operates two channels in radio: Power FM and Love AM.
EBS (Educational Broadcasting System)

CBS: is the first commercial radio broadcaster in South Korea. It contains programs about Christianity.
Other religious programming broadcasters: PBC (Pyeonghwa Broadcasting Corporation, 평화방송), BBS (Buddhism Broadcasting System (BBS), 佛教放送), FEBC (Far East Broadcasting Co., Korea, 極東放送), *WBS (원동방송)

Traffic broadcasters: TBS (Traffic Broadcasting System). They specialize in traffic. Many other stations also provide hourly traffic condition reports, typically for 3 minutes every 57 minutes. There are many radio stations in Korea, but channels are not uniquely distinctive. KBS 1FM, KBS 1AM, TBS (Traffic Broadcasting System) are somewhat distinctive. Other channels are usually broadcast according to people's lifestyle.[5]

Television
KORCAD was the first TV station in South Korea, which launched in 1956. In South Korea, terrestrial television broadcasting is common and popular. As terrestrial broadcasters, there are 5 channels with 4 television stations:

KBS 1TV
KBS 2TV
MBC
EBS
SBS

KBS, MBC, EBS are public broadcasters while SBS is a commercial broadcaster (so-called many public broadcasters). It is a unique system; unlike South Korea, almost every county has one public broadcaster and many commercial broadcasters. KBS is funded by public money accrued from a television license fee gathered from all South Korea households with a television set. As of 2010, the fee is 2500 won (about 2 USD). Due to low public funds, KBS2 runs commercials. Looking at the ownership of MBC, 70% of it is owned by a government-owned not-for-profit organization (The Foundation of Broadcast Culture), and 30% of it belongs to 'Jeong-su Scholarship Foundation'. Also, because KBS2 and MBC run commercials, there are a lot of controversies on the definition of public broadcasting in South Korea.[7]

Digital television technology emerged recently. Although some television stations have begun broadcasting digital signals, it is not yet widespread as in the United States. The Government of South Korea set December 31, 2012 as the deadline for digital conversion in South Korea. From 2013, South Korea will convert from the analogue broadcasting to the digital broadcasting. (This date coincides with the United Kingdom conversion date.) According to DTV Korea, the rate of digital TV sets in use is about 60% (2010).[8]

New media[edit]

When it comes to Internet use, South Korea ranked third in the world in 2003.[9] According to statistics of the Korean Ministry of Information and Communication, 78.5% of families own a computer, of which 93.6% use the Internet (2005). Many business utilize the Internet in Korea for services such as news, social media, shopping, banking, games, and educational content.
Internet journalism
Joongang Ilbo developed the first internet news website in Asia in 1995. After the start, almost every daily newspaper made their website. Various Internet news networks have emerged. One such website is "OhmyNews" which features contents of regular staff as well as so called 'citizen reporters' who provide new content for very little money. Although there are some problems about citizen reporters' abilities to write an article, unique opinions are shown and new progressive journalism continues to exist. And other internet news services like 'Pressian' or 'Ddanzi Ilbo' exist.

Social media
As in other countries, social media has come into the spotlight in South Korea.

Blogs
Almost every big portal site provides a blogging service. Nate, Naver, and Daum's blog are the most popular.

Social Networks (SNS, Social Networking Service)
An early social networking platform Cyworld was launched in South Korea in 2000. It shut down in 2014. Users could upload their information, mood, pictures etc. It featured "following" of other people in a similar vein as Facebook.

Micro Blogging
The most famous Micro Blog is Twitter, with its prevalence growing in conjunction with the growing popularity of Smartphones in South Korea. 'me2day' and 'yozm' are some other micro blogs in South Korean media.

Regulations
What is the grounds of media regulations? Although broadcasters have freedom of expression, broadcasters have to promote public interest because electromagnetic waves are in the public domain. 'Media law' consist of two structures briefly: Business Regulation, and Content Related Regulation. They mean fairness among the broadcasters, and freedom of expression each.

Business regulation
Restriction market entry
It is the most powerful regulation that decide who will broadcasting business. The grounds of this regulation are largely that: electromagnetic wave is scarce, so all of those who want to operate a broadcasting system cannot do it, and the providers have to set fair to operate a broadcaster(ex, financial power, social experiences etc.) Until just recently large companies (above top 30), newspaper, agency couldn't operate a broadcasting system because of the independence of media. (It caused problems in Korea in history.) But recently newly revised media law allows it.[10]

Terrestrial broadcasting, Cable Television broadcasting, satellite broadcasting: government permit
News channel, General service channel, home-shopping channel: government's approval
Other program: Resister[11]
Restrictions on the ownership
It means restriction on the number of broadcasting system that one provider can own. Its purpose is to prevent monopoly or oligopoly on broadcasting. In Summary:
One provider (person or corporation) can only own one business on the Terrestrial broadcaster and satellite broadcaster.
Cable system operator and program provider can own more than one broadcaster and transmission line. But, they can be restricted by the government with regards to market share and the number of providers.
One provider can own terrestrial broadcaster, satellite broadcaster, and cable broadcaster except a combination of terrestrial broadcaster and cable broadcaster.
On cable broadcasting, one provider can serve system operator, network operator, and program provider but, they can restricted with regard to a market share and the number of providers. According to newly enactment of Broadcasting Law and Internet Multimedia Broadcasting Business Law from President Lee Myung-Bak's administration, the trend is changing. Newspaper and large company can hold a 10-percent stake in terrestrial broadcaster, a 30-percent stake in cable broadcaster, a 49-percent stake in IPTV or news channel.