The Elite-Mass Linkage

Min Shu
GSICCS, Waseda University
Outline of the Lecture

• Who are the elite?
• Top-down domination by the elite
• Bottom-up activism of the mass
• Institutional context of elite-mass linkage
• The role of intermediate organizations
• Belief systems: value, ideology and culture
• Reconsidering opinion leaders
Who are the elite?

- The elite: a group of powerful and influential people, who are usually rich, intelligent, etc.
- Different societal elites
  - Political elite
  - Economic elite
  - Intellectual elite
  - Cultural elite
  - Sports elite
- Elite in a global society
  - Transnational flexibility (capability)
  - Cross-country influences
Top-down domination by the elite

• The elite class
  ▫ Special social background
  ▫ Receiving good education
  ▫ Occupying key positions
  ▫ A specific code of behavior

• The influences of elite
  ▫ Shaping value system
  ▫ Influencing public policy-making
  ▫ Maintaining social hierarchy
  ▫ Controlling mass media agenda
Bottom-up activism of the mass

• The mass
  ▫ Ordinary people with different interests
  ▫ Diversified social backgrounds
  ▫ Loosely organized or non-organized

• Mass activism
  ▫ Petition, letters to the editor, etc.
  ▫ Issue-oriented social movement
  ▫ Non-governmental organizations, civil groups, activist networks...
  ▫ Boycott, strike, protest, terrorism...
Institutional context of elite-mass linkage

- **Political institutions**
  - Authoritarian or democracy
  - Presidential or parliamentary

- **Electoral systems**
  - Plurality vs. proportional representation
  - Direct vs. indirect

- **Political party system**
  - One-party, two-party, multi-party...
  - Cartel party
The role of intermediate organizations

- Intermediate organizations
  - The organizational link between the elite and the mass
  - Information dissemination
  - Ideological construction
  - Activist coordination
  - Facilitating social mobility

- Examples of intermediate organizations
  - Political parties
  - Non-governmental organizations
  - Schools, colleges, and universities
Belief systems: value, ideology and culture

• The belief systems
  ▫ Predisposed views about the society and its operation
  ▫ Deeply embedded and difficult to change
  ▫ Mediating the processing of information

• Shared belief systems strengthen the elite-mass linkage
  ▫ Trust between the elite and the mass
  ▫ Healthy two-way communication
  ▫ Effective intermediate organizations

• Change in belief systems
  ▫ Top-down imposition
  ▫ Bottom-up activism or revolution
Reconsidering opinion leaders

- Opinion leaders
  - Persons who are capable of influencing the views of others
  - Key characteristics
    - Communication skills, professional competence, nature of social networks

- Opinion leaders and the elite-mass linkage
  - From media coverage to public discussions
  - Linking public authority and public opinion

- Elite division and mass disorientation