

**Commissioned Study on Production Guidelines  
Emphasizing Principles of Fairness and Public  
Participation in Televised Political Talk Shows**

**Summarized Version**

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## **Part 1: Introduction**

### **Section 1: Research Objectives and Research Questions**

In light of the ubiquity of content across broadcasting media, coupled with the watchdog role of played by news media organizations, it is essential that platforms are provided to encourage discussion and exchange of various perspectives; doing so not only promotes citizen participation in democratic politics, but also enhances public accountability. When these platforms are in the form of television programs in the field of political discourse and facilitate well-informed participation in political, economic, social, and cultural decision-making processes, a diverse range of perspectives can be imparted and a foundation for rational deliberation can be provided to the entire population. Consequently, this ensures that the functioning of democracy is not merely a collection and calculation of preferences, but rather a process driven by informed and reasoned debate. Conversely, if televised political talk shows fail to adhere to principles of fairness when imparting such information, viewers are more likely to be pushed into specific trains of thought rather than cultivate critical thinking, potentially harming the society or the nation.

This study compiles and analyzes various aspects and implementation methods related to the observation and evaluation of political talk shows. Through the examination of actual broadcast content, production and broadcasting processes, in-depth interviews with producers and participants of political talk shows, as well as discussions involving industry representatives, academic institutions, and experts, this study aims to propose recommendations on policy directions that can contribute to the regulatory framework under the tripartite governance model. In addition to analyzing the current production and broadcasting processes, this study also refers to international standards and consensus on regulations,

production processes, and self-regulatory norms of political talk shows in the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea, all of which can serve as a basis for examining relevant policies in Taiwan.

## **I. Problem Statement**

1. What regulations are in place in the aforementioned countries and regions regarding political talk shows? This includes laws, administrative regulations, self-regulatory norms of industry organizations or associations, as well as the practical production and broadcasting processes and practices employed by media organizations.
2. What are the opinions and analyses of domestic scholars and experts regarding the production and broadcasting of political talk shows? Additionally, what are the production guidelines established by television industry organizations or associations, and what are the actual practices followed in the production of television programs?
3. In order to establish indicators, we observed the production processes of existing political talk shows, encompassing six programs from six different channels, including Public Television, that are associated with three major issues over the course of the 2022 fiscal year (two consecutive days).
  - (1) What are the observation indicators for political talk shows?
  - (2) What are the results obtained from the aforementioned observations?
    1. Analysis of the production process of controversial cases (e.g., those that have faced sanctions or complaints):
      - (1) Analysis based on the aforementioned indicators.
      - (2) Based on the analysis results, propose production guidelines for reference.

2. What are the opinions of experts, scholars, industry representatives, and professional associations regarding the regulations for interactions between political talk shows and viewers? Focus group discussions were conducted with view to compiling suggestions from experts, scholars, professional associations, and industry representatives on the current production status and internal control processes.

## **Section 2: Research Methods**

To address the research questions and integrate the expertise and knowledge within the research team, this study adopts the following research methods:

### **I. Literature Review and Comparative Research Method**

The literature review method is used to examine relevant regulations on political talk shows in the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, South Korea, and Japan. It is also applied to explore the practical production processes and practices of industry operators in those countries. Additionally, this method is utilized to analyze the opinions of domestic scholars and experts regarding the production of political talk shows, the production guidelines set by industry operators and professional associations, as well as the practical production practices of television programs in the domestic context.

### **II. Content Analysis Method**

To establish fair observation indicators for political talk shows and reasonable measures of audience interaction, this study employs content analysis. Specifically, it analyzes the selected six political talk shows' coverage of three major issues: the "Lin Chih-Chien plagiarism case," "Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan," and "The military drills of The People's Liberation Army (PLA)." The content analysis examines the specific performances and presentation of these issues in the selected programs.

### **III. Focus Group Interview Method**

This study employs the focus group interview method by conducting a total of three focus group discussions. A diverse group of participants, including representatives from citizen groups, professional associations, and scholars/experts, were invited to participate. In total, twenty-five individuals were involved in the focus group discussions.

### **IV. In-depth interviews, expert meetings, and comprehensive analysis**

Following the completion of the aforementioned tasks, this study proceeds to the second phase, which involves the development of "Guidelines for Political Talk Shows and Audience Interaction." In addition to referring to international standards and existing domestic debates, feasible guidelines are formulated based on empirical data to avoid excessive deviation from reality. The research tasks in the second phase of this study (after submitting the midterm report) include the following:

1. Conduct interviews with the program production staff, focusing on the hosts and producers of the aforementioned six programs, based on the previous recommendations.
2. Organize two panel discussions with experts and scholars specializing in communications and law to develop an initial draft of the "Guidelines for Political Talk Shows and Audience Interaction."
3. In addition to the aforementioned reference guidelines, propose policy recommendations based on the compiled data.

## **Part 2: Analysis of Political Talk Shows and Fairness Principles in Five Countries**

Based on the analysis of fairness principles and regulations related to public participation in political talk shows in the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea, this study identified several principles that are generally observed:

### **I. Various regulatory principles should be balanced with freedom of speech.**

The legal regulations examined in this study in the five countries/regions generally adopt a cautious and positive stance towards freedom of speech, including the editorial rights of broadcasting media. In other words, although broadcasting media has limited airtime and is characterized by scarcity, which necessitates considering the proportion of different opinions and perspectives expressed, the issue of freedom of speech arises when content regulation is imposed to ensure balance. As for

the supervisory authorities in charge of media regulation, their reference examples or QA explanations on how program production adheres to the "principle of fairness" serve as guidance rather than mandatory requirements. These guidelines assist in promoting self-disciplinary principles that align with the specific program needs of each media outlet. From a legal standpoint, they fall under the category of "administrative guidance" (referencing Articles 165 and subsequent sections of the Administrative Procedure Act). Program producers or media channels have complete freedom to adopt or disregard these reference guidelines, without infringing upon freedom of speech or media autonomy.

## **II. Even under the premise of freedom of speech, hate speech and discrimination are not accepted.**

Although freedom of speech is an important value, the content related to racial discrimination, hate speech, and similar issues is generally not accepted by the five countries/regions examined in this study. Furthermore, the principle of fairness, expressed in diverse forms, tends to be transformed into a "principle of justice" in practical implementation. Therefore, when it comes to marginalized groups or those unable to express their opinions, there is an emphasis on requiring broadcasting professionals to provide adequate time for clarification. This principle is particularly evident in the European Union, a supranational organization composed of complex member states, which shows special concern for minority groups, including ethnic minorities, and the media's influence on young people. It is clearly revealed in relevant directives and plans.

## **III. Facts and fact-checking are of core significance across multiple**

**indicators.**

While the verification of facts does not directly equate to fairness, it is crucial for both professional broadcasting personnel responsible for content production and the program content generated through public participation and interaction to strictly adhere to fact-checking standards. As for those expressing their opinions, it is essential to clearly communicate to the audience that their statements are personal opinions or commentary, and should not be confused with facts.

**IV. The examination or expression of principles of fairness should not be solely based on quantitative measures, but should also emphasize qualitative implications.**

Although quantitative indicators are easy to calculate and grasp, they can easily become superficial. Therefore, countries like Japan emphasize the importance of obtaining fairness through "qualitative implications." It is worth noting that the discussion on principles of fairness has gradually decreased, even becoming non-existent or transformed in various countries, but it is still considered an important principle in Taiwan. The main reason for this is related to the media structure and scale in our country. With a high population density and a large number of media channels, channel saturation is not unusual: almost all cable TV systems include all news channels in their broadcasting service range. This puts viewers in Taiwan in a vulnerable state of being easily influenced during certain historical stages. However, individual viewing time is limited, and selective viewing is a norm when it is impossible to watch all content on all channels. The more complicated issue is that during the phased development of cable television in Taiwan, the process of democratization is also taking place.

When viewers cannot access all content on all channels and engage in selective viewing, the fairness of content on a single channel becomes crucial for viewers to obtain correct and sufficient information related to democratic activities within their limited viewing time.

## **V. The effective implementation of self-discipline necessitates sustained practice and continuous adaptation.**

In the context of the broadcasting industry, the practice of self-discipline extends beyond the formulation of various production and Production Guidelines; it also demands a comprehensive assessment from a long-term and timely adjustment perspective.

A comparison between these five countries and the fairness principle indicators and production and broadcasting regulations related to public participation can be found on page 196.

## **Part 3: Content Analysis of Political Talk Shows Discussing Major Issues**

### **Section 1: Selection of Topics**

This study observed and recorded the methods of public participation and the content of program discussions related to three major issues. It then analyzed the interactive content using content analysis methodology.

#### **I. Lin Chih-Chien plagiarism case**

Duration: July 5th, 2022 - August 12th, 2022

Reason for withdrawal: On July 5th, Lin Chih-Chien was accused by Wang Hung-Wei of plagiarizing his master's thesis at Chung Hua University; it was also revealed that his master's thesis at National Taiwan University's Institute of National Development Studies was suspected of plagiarizing the master's thesis of another student, Yu Cheng-Huang, from the same institute. On August 9th, National Taiwan University's Academic Ethics Committee announced the revocation of Lin Chih-Chien's degree, and on August 24th, Chung Hua University also announced the revocation of his degree. Lin Chih-Chien announced his withdrawal from the Taoyuan mayoral election on August 12th.

This case involves a significant event that led to the withdrawal of a candidate and influenced electoral conditions. Throughout the development of the event, there was public discussion regarding academic ethics and standards for thesis plagiarism. After National Taiwan University held a press conference on August 9th to announce the revocation of the degree, Lin Chih-Chien expressed his objection. The key focus of this study is to observe whether various political talk shows adhered to the principle of fairness and provided the revoked party with a reasonable and appropriate opportunity for reporting or expressing their views (i.e., exercising the right to reply). The aim is to uncover the truth through a more in-depth debate.

## **II. Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan**

Date: August 2, 2022, 10:43 AM

Reason for the visit: Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, led a delegation to Taiwan on the evening of August 2nd at 10:43 PM. This visit marked the first time in twenty-five years that a Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives had visited Taiwan. The itinerary included meetings with members of the ruling and

opposition parties in the Legislative Yuan, receiving an honorary medal from President Tsai Ing-Wen, and a visit to the Jingmei Human Rights Memorial Park. They departed Taiwan on the evening of August 3rd at 5:29 PM.

This event caused changes in U.S.-China-Taiwan relations and garnered much international attention. Due to the sensitivity of the issues involved, it had implications for cross-strait military situations. Both the visiting and interviewed parties maintained strict secrecy about the itinerary, leading to unconfirmed speculations and rumors. In the absence of official information, the adherence to the principle of separating reporting from commentary and achieving fairness remains to be confirmed.

Furthermore, the purpose of this visit, its impact on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and how the CCP responded are all subjects of speculative discussion that is difficult to verify. In that light, it is important to clarify whether political talk shows adhere to journalistic ethics and whether they blur the line between facts and speculations, necessitating further examination.

Thirdly, after Pelosi's departure, an anonymous post on the PTT forum claimed that Taiwan had paid a political PR firm 94 million NTD to lobby for Pelosi's visit. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded that it was entirely fabricated. If political talk shows addressed this issue, it would be crucial to verify the information beforehand, seek and consider the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statements, and provide a mechanism for appropriate responses from relevant individuals, such as diplomats and PR companies. Can they engage in a discussion that is neutral, objective, and impartial regarding this significant issue?

The above points indicate that in terms of balance, neutrality, and the separation of reporting and commentary, there may be shortcomings in the practical implementation of the fairness principle in this case.

### III. The military drills of The People's Liberation Army<sup>1</sup>

Period: August 4th to 10th, 2022

Reason for selection: China announced live-fire military exercises in six areas surrounding Taiwan, with military implications resembling an attempt to blockade Taiwan's airspace and waters for three days. International media interpreted this as China's response to the visit of Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, considering it a violation of sovereignty. Additionally, on August 4th, China launched Dongfeng series missiles that flew over Taiwan's airspace, but Taiwan did not issue an air raid warning. Subsequent reports from "Up Media" suggested that the National Security Council pressured the Ministry of National Defense not to issue an air defense warning. Media coverage during the military exercises included the scope of the exercises, missiles passing over Taiwan, and air defense warnings.

This is a national security issue that affected international geopolitics and stirred fears of war among the people, making it of significant importance. Based on the known media reports, it was evident that the military capabilities and weaponry of both sides of the Taiwan Strait were mentioned, but there is a lack of opinions or statements from relevant national security entities (such as the Ministry of National Defense). This indicates a potential oversight in the implementation of the "neutrality" aspect within this major issue, which deserves further examination in this study.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that political talk shows rely on

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<sup>1</sup> Military exercises are typically conducted by nations; in the original Chinese version of this research, political talk shows used the term "Chinese Communist Party (CCP) military exercises" as the title or language used by hosts and guests (rather than using the term China). In order to align with the content of the shows, the Chinese version of the original text uses the term "中共軍演" as the vocabulary for writing the report. In the English version, it is translated as "The military drills of The People's Liberation Army" according to the official translation used by the Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of China.

information provided by the audience (revealed through social media), which, in the absence of verification or when verification is not possible, may fail to provide relevant entities with the opportunity to respond. This raises concerns about potential violations of the principle of fairness and is an important aspect to scrutinize. The discussion of reasons behind the country's non-issuance of air defense warnings (and the allegations of pressure) should be approached in a manner that emphasizes evidence-seeking, adherence to fairness principles, and avoidance of emotional sensationalism. This is another crucial point that requires observation and discussion.

## **Section 2: Themes of Coding**

According to the research objectives of this project, the coding process in practical terms is divided into the following coding items: (1) Coding Information C; (2) Program Participants' Information G; (3) Host H; (4) Analysis of Issue Stances S; (5) News Sources and Content CC; (6) Audience Interaction I. There are a total of six major coding items. For detailed information on each major item and its subcategories, please refer to the final report.

## **Section 3: Analysis of Content of Major Issues**

### **I. Overview of Coding Results**

This study employed four coders to code six programs - Let's Talk(有

話好說), Critical Moment(關鍵時刻), Spicy News 152(辣新聞 152 節目), Cheng Knows(鄭知道了), News Face to Face(新聞面對面), and Shaokang 's War Room(少康戰情室), all of which discussed the three major topics (Lin Chih-Chien plagiarism case, Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, The military drills of The People's Liberation Army (PLA)). In total, the study recorded 59 hours, 37 minutes, and 40 seconds of content, with an average of 3 hours, 13 minutes, and 23 seconds of discussion per program, per event, per day. However, "Talk to You" (Public Television) and "Spicy News 152" (Formosa TV) had a program length of 1 hour daily, while the remaining four programs were 2 hours long.

Based on the recorded duration, some programs had slightly longer airtime than indicated on the schedule. Although, "Let's Talk," "News Face to Face," and "Shaokang's War Room" never exceeded the allocated time, in contrast, "Critical Moment" exceeded the scheduled time on four out of the six observed days, with each instance lasting approximately 4 minutes; "Spicy News 152" went over the allotted time by approximately 2 minutes each day. "Cheng Knows" exceeded the scheduled time by around 4 minutes daily.

## **II. Discussion of Results**

In this coding process, a total of 36 episodes of political talk shows were analyzed. The topics covered in these episodes included the Lin Chih-Chien plagiarism case, Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, and the military drills of The People's Liberation Army, with each topic comprising 12 episodes. On average, the duration of each episode was approximately 1 hour, 39 minutes, and 54 seconds. The longest episode lasted 2 hours, 4 minutes, and 53 seconds, while the shortest episode was 55 minutes and 30 seconds.

Excluding the hosts, the episodes featured a total of 212 guests (including those who appeared in multiple episodes), averaging 5.8 guests per episode. The majority of the guests, accounting for nearly 80% of the total, consisted of individuals holding political positions or elected politicians, lacking diversity in terms of representation from civil society organizations, business representatives, and government officials. This limited representation makes it a greater challenge to incorporate perspectives from business entities or expert scholars. Approximately one-third of the guests held political positions, with the majority being members of parliament, while the remaining portion comprised individuals holding party-related positions. Regarding expertise of the guests, three-quarters of them belonged to the fields of humanities and social sciences, with a scarcity of guests from disciplines such as biology, medicine, agriculture, engineering, natural sciences, and science education. From a disciplinary perspective, there was a lack of diversity across various fields.

In terms of news sources, there were a total of 219 news sources used in the programs, averaging 6.08 news sources per episode. However, less than half of these news sources provided highly credible evidence. The second most frequently used category of news sources consisted of less reliable content, such as party-compiled information, news data, social media, and others.

#### **Section 4: Dimensions of Proposed Indicators**

The initially proposed indicators for the principle of fairness in political talk shows in this study are as follows (refer to Appendix Seventeen in the final report):

## **I. Theme orientation**

1. The topics are not limited to political events and individuals, but encompass diverse discussions on important domestic and international events.
2. When discussing political topics, the program does not excessively emphasize individual blame.
3. The focus of political discussions does not excessively emphasize party confrontation.
4. The program features proactive exploration of forward-looking or trending content based on the topics.
5. The discussions on topics guide the audience in understanding the chronological context and multiple aspects of the events.
6. The subtopics discussed in the program are closely related to the core theme of the program and do not excessively stretch to promote a single political interpretation.

## **II. Guest expertise**

1. The program invites participants who consider diverse views and aims to arrange participants with different perspectives.
2. The program invites participants with professional knowledge of the attributes of the topics of discussion topics (e.g., representatives of relevant positions, political roles, expertise in backgrounds).
3. Participants avoid using biased narrative expressions or inciting emotional reactions.

4. Participants use a simple and understandable manner to help the audience grasp complex issues.
5. The hosts remind guests not to provide unverifiable details in their discussions and attempt to question or request verifiable sources of information.
6. The content from information sources also has credibility, representativeness, and relevance to the topic.
7. Guests fact-check the information provided by each other.

### **III. Diverse opinions**

1. The host's questioning and the respondents' responses do not excessively reveal personal positions.
2. The host is capable of playing the role of an arbitrator and encourages guests with different viewpoints to express opinions.
3. The host does not create an impression that they are both the host and a participant, limiting or interrupting the expression of opinions by the guests.
4. The host and guests are able to appropriately shift the focus of discussion towards institutional matters.
5. The discussion topics take into account the perspectives of marginalized groups or minority communities, particularly avoiding discriminatory language.
6. The host's and guests' positions avoid becoming a monologue and express both positive and negative opinions appropriately.
7. Whether the presentation of public opinions provides space for public discussion or if the production unit unilaterally selects and presents

opinions.

#### **IV. Discussion time**

1. The host tries to provide sufficient speaking time for the guests to focus on a specific issue.
2. The program offers the opportunity for interviews with involved parties or allows them to clarify the situation through live call-ins.
3. The program encourages audience participation, such as allowing live audiences, phone call-ins, or having the host relay online comments during the live broadcast.
4. The discussion of topics revolves around and centers on the core theme, avoiding deceptive practices or concept substitution.

### **Part 4: Expert Opinions, Proposed Indicators, and Evaluations of Principles of Fairness and Audience Interaction in Political Talk Shows**

#### **Section 1: Expert Opinions on Principles of Fairness and Audience Interaction in Political Talk Shows**

##### **I. Discussions and suggestions from domestic experts and scholars**

Overall, the evaluated aspects of political talk shows (Tang, 2013) can be summarized as follows: (1) while the content of most programs appears

diverse and unrestricted, it lacks accuracy and impartiality, and there is a lack of mechanisms to supervise the participants of the programs. (2) Due to production considerations, program production units often rely on or even deliberately favor a few influential commentators, resulting in the concentration of discourse power and influencing public opinion and policy-making. (3) When discussing judicial cases, the focus is often on scrutinizing case details and questioning the deficiencies in the judicial investigation process, which can shape public opinion and compromise the independence of the judicial system. (4) The process of discussing issues in political talk shows often exhibits a clear biased stance, excessively favoring specific political forces or ideologies, thereby violating the principle of fairness. (5) Media production and editing generally lack separation from management, leading to television political talk shows being inclined towards serving institutional interests and becoming tools for private use of public resources.

According to Sheng (2005), respondents with lower political knowledge have a higher probability of engaging in call-ins, with male viewers more likely to participate compared to female viewers. Zhang and Luo (2007) also noted that viewers, recognizing call-ins as a means of expressing their opinions, especially those who perceive call-ins as a form of political participation, tend to engage in call-ins more frequently. However, the phenomenon of viewers' willingness to participate in call-ins may be more indifferent. Hu et al. (2008) conducted a study during the 2004 legislative elections and found that although political talk shows during the election period provided abundant information on electoral analysis and opportunities for the public to express their views through call-ins, half of the respondents did not engage with any political talk shows at all. Even among different types of public figures appearing on political talk shows, there was no interaction between them, resulting in isolated, fragmented, and emotional forms of public expression (Yang, 2004).

## II. Principles and regulations on program production and broadcasting

### 1. Principle of Fairness

In the existing broadcasting-related regulations, two regulations explicitly mention the principle of fairness. One is Article 27(2) of the Satellite Broadcasting Act, which states, "*The produced and broadcasted news and comments shall pay attention to fact verification and principles of fairness.*" The other is Article 36 of the Public Television Act, which states that program production and broadcasting should adhere to "*ensure objectivity and fairness, and offer opportunities for fair participation and expression of opinions to the public and different groups.*" Additionally, although not directly using the term "fairness," similar concepts can be found in the Enforcement Rules of the Radio and Television Act, Article 13, which states that news programs should be based on facts and their contents should be objective, fair, factual, comprehensive, and not of an advertising nature. Although the aforementioned regulations specify that news programs should adhere to the principle of fairness, the Satellite Broadcasting Act and the Enforcement Rules of the Radio and Television Act do not explicitly explain the connotation of this principle. Regarding the fairness mentioned in the Public Television Act, it can be understood from the supplementary explanation in the subsequent text that it refers to ensuring that the general public and different groups have the opportunity to participate in programs without being influenced by specific factors.

For more information on internal production principles, public associations, and self-regulatory principles of television stations in our country, please refer to the final report.

## 2. Audience Interaction

The existing regulations and internal production guidelines of television stations include the "Program Production Guidelines of the Taiwan Public Television Service Foundation (PTS Foundation)," which specifically addresses the call-in interaction with viewers and provides detailed explanations. Please refer to Appendix 19 of the final report for more information.

### **Section2: Opinions of Scholars, Experts, Professional Associations, and Civic Groups (Focus Groups)**

This study conducted three focus group interviews in December 2022 to gather expert opinions based on the research findings of content analysis and the established indicators regarding the discussions among domestic scholars. The invited experts for the focus group discussions in this study included: (1) scholars and experts with expertise in journalism, communications, and law; (2) representatives from professional associations or civic groups; and (3) media professionals. For the compilation of opinions from focus groups and the initial draft of indicators, please refer to Appendix Table 19 of the final report.

Overall, the discussions among scholars, professional associations, civic group representatives, and media professionals on the principles of fairness in political talk shows and indicators for public participation and interaction yielded several conclusions.

**I. It is necessary to avoid principles of fairness becoming merely a formality.**

1. Most participants agree that while formal fairness is the easiest to achieve and a fundamental requirement of procedural justice, if fairness is only discussed in terms of the number of guests and speaking time, it becomes merely a formality.
2. The concept and practice of fairness should be reconsidered when discussing political party issues and other social diversity topics. Particularly, when safeguarding significant human and social values, fairness should be taken into account. For example, hate speech is not protected by the principle of fairness.
3. In implementing the fairness principle, besides ensuring fairness in terms of time and opinion representation, the expressive abilities of program participants should also be considered. Program production units should assist individuals with different opinions in expressing their views smoothly.
4. The host holds substantial decision-making power over the direction of the program discussion and should exercise appropriate and timely guidance to help guests express their opinions clearly. If guests representing different opinions cannot be invited due to time constraints, the host should also play the role of conveying different perspectives.
5. The host should have awareness and understanding of significant social values and, when necessary, should intervene or remind when there are clearly erroneous statements. For example, hate speech or statements that violate basic human rights.

## **II. Facts are the non-negotiable foundation of discussions.**

1. The production team should complete fact-checking work before the program is aired, especially regarding interactive materials provided by the audience. Professional fact-checking assistance should be available if needed. In cases where real-time programs make it difficult to conduct prior fact-checking, a production team should be present to conduct preliminary verification of guests' statements and promptly report any discrepancies to the host for immediate clarification during the program.
2. The program host should have a considerable understanding of the factual aspects of the discussion topic. If there are obvious doubts about a guest's statement, the host should raise them immediately and seek clarification. If errors are identified during a live program, they should be promptly corrected. If it is a matter of opinion, the host can remind the audience that it is the guest's personal viewpoint.
3. The production team should establish a mechanism for corrections and protect the right to correction. The correction mechanism can involve verbal corrections by the host (in the same or subsequent episodes), on-screen captions, or graphics.
4. The interactive materials provided by the audience should undergo verification and review by the production team. When broadcasting such materials, information such as the date and source of the video should be presented to provide a basis for the audience's judgment and evaluation.

### **Section 3: Evaluating the Suitability of Proposed Indicators: Analysis of Disciplinary Cases**

To assess the suitability of the indicators listed in Table 17 for the

purposes of this study, we focused on the program "大政治大爆卦" from Chung Tien News Channel. The host and research assistant referred to the indicator table and analyzed the content of the program. Each indicator was evaluated using a five-point scale (1 for "very poor performance" and 5 for "excellent performance"). If an indicator was deemed unsuitable for evaluating the format and content of the program, it was marked as "not applicable." The results of the analysis on the applicability of the indicators can be found in Appendix 8 of the final report.

#### **Section 4: In-depth Interviews**

Based on the research design, this study focused on the production process of six selected programs through content analysis, specifically examining three specific topics. The main research questions and the findings from the in-depth interviews are presented below:

##### **I. What are the processes and mechanisms for determining the discussion topics (issues) of the program?**

The establishment of the topics/issues for political talk shows is generally determined during editing or related discussions. This process is typically completed earlier on the day of production, with the involvement of the entire production team. However, based on the editorial policies of different channels or programs, they may emphasize different angles or focal points.

##### **II. What are the processes and mechanisms for determining the guests?**

**How effectively do the guests contribute to the specific three topics? What roles and actions do the program editors play in determining the guests' involvement in the specific three topics?**

The selection of guests for the program primarily takes into account their stance (sometimes manifested as political affiliations) and their ability to articulate their views. Almost all programs have encountered situations where desired guests were unable to attend (including refusing to appear on the show). In some cases, invitees may choose to avoid the program or channel for various reasons, while in others, scheduling conflicts prevent them from participating.

Furthermore, all political talk shows have been required to establish editorial teams. In this interview, nearly all respondents approached guest selection and invitation activities from the perspective of producers and production teams, with the role of editors being marginal and largely unaddressed. While editors are involved in discussions concerning fairness principles and norms for audience engagement in interactive broadcasting, most interviewees consider producers and hosts to be the key overseers of fairness principles, with the role of editors being less pronounced. Regarding audience interaction, hosts exert the strongest influence on incorporating public participation into live (including outdoor recording) shows, followed by producers/production teams, and then editors. Editors mostly review the content after the program recording is completed, thus for live, real-time, outdoor, and similar formats of political talk shows, editors tend to provide relevant feedback after the shows.

**III. What interactive mechanisms does the program provide to the audience? What is the process for handling audience interaction and**

## **opinions?**

None of the three programs in this study have a direct mechanism for audience participation or interaction. During the interviews, when discussing audience participation and interaction, it was mainly mentioned that individuals sought assistance from reporters in the news department for fact-checking or that responses to non-public events were disregarded.

## **Part 5: Suggestions and Revisions from Experts and Scholars on Initial Indicators and Production Guidelines**

In response to the initial draft of the "First Version of Fairness Principles for TV Political Talk Shows," consisting of 6 dimensions and 31 indicators, as well as the "First Version of Production Guidelines for Public Participation and Interaction," consisting of 4 dimensions and 13 production reference principles, the first expert and scholar symposium was held on March 30, 2023. Prior to the symposium, the research team provided the participants with an agenda for discussion, followed by an approximately two-hour symposium. The feedback received from the first symposium was incorporated as discussion material for the second expert symposium. The second expert symposium took place on April 14, 2023, with a total of 10 experts and scholars participating. Among them, there were 2 individuals with a legal background (1 per session) and 6 communication scholars (3 per session). Additionally, for each session, a representative from the television industry was invited to participate in the discussion.

Following two rounds of expert and scholar symposiums, the initial set of indicators and production guidelines proposed in this study have

undergone revisions, resulting in the second and third versions. In order to make the indicators and production guidelines more practical and actionable, the research team further developed them into operational practices, as outlined in Appendix 41 and Appendix 42 of the final report.

## **Part 6: Policy Suggestions**

### **Section 1: Implementing Self-Regulation in TV Political Talk Shows to Conform to the Definition and Scope of Principles of Fairness**

During the course of this research, participants in focus groups, in-depth interviews, and expert-scholar conferences engaged in discussions regarding the definition and scope of the research objectives. These discussions further influenced the development of indicators and norms, as well as the revisions made by experts and scholars to these indicators and norms. Therefore, they serve as important foundations for the policy recommendations proposed in this study. The following are detailed explanations of these discussions:

#### **I. Political talk shows**

Through the analysis of foreign policies, case studies, and discussions among domestic experts and scholars, it can be observed that the definition of "political talk shows" is unclear. In other countries, it is categorized as talk shows (Japan), discussion/debate programs (South Korea), or broadly referred to as "media content" (the US). In some cases, political talk shows are also used interchangeably with "talk shows." From the inception of this research project, the emphasis has been placed on programs that involve

discussions on political events. Therefore, both domestic and foreign policies, or case studies, were collected with a broader definition, which may not directly align with the regulations specifically targeted at political talk shows.

In other countries' relevant policies, it can be observed that although the official term is "political talk shows," the focus of regulation still lies in discussions related to elections and public social policies. Some countries (e.g., the UK) place emphasis on the political character of the hosts, aiming to exclude the possibility of political figures hosting programs or at least require them to disclose their political stance, serving as a mechanism for viewers to assess any specific bias in the program. In addition, while "excessive political interpretation" or "one-sided interpretation" is a topic of discussion among experts and scholars in Taiwan, for television channels with specific audiovisual service objectives (e.g., ethnic television stations), their broadcasting mission revolves around serving specific languages or ethnic groups. It may be an obligation for them to produce programs from a specific perspective as a prerequisite for obtaining a broadcasting license. Therefore, the observation of so-called single-point interpretation still needs to be determined based on the context.

## **II. Fairness and Principles of Fairness**

In the process of collecting various data for this research, it can be a challenge reaching a consensus to define "fairness." Generally, it embodies notions of balance, equity, and diversity. In terms of "balance," it refers to the participation and expression of contrasting or opposing views on a single issue. Regarding "equity," it entails consistency in the format, duration, and presentation of multiple perspectives on a single issue (for

example, similar time allocation and equal representation for each viewpoint). As for "diversity," it signifies the inclusion of more than one opinion or viewpoint on a given issue. Although these three aspects may appear similar, they can be difficult to achieve simultaneously in practical implementation and may even conflict with each other. For instance, in a single election, providing equal speaking time for a large number of candidates within the limited airtime of a political talk show presents various production choices.

It can be observed that apart from the theoretical definition, the application of the principle of fairness in the actual production process of political talk shows requires consideration of program duration or length. Additionally, based on interviews conducted with relevant producers of political talk shows in this research, it is evident that the principle of fairness can be compromised to some extent due to various factors. These factors include the voluntary participation of political parties or candidates in specific programs, or the need to invite guests at short notice due to unforeseen events, resulting in the unavailability of representatives for certain viewpoints. Hence, in the practical implementation, these circumstances lead to a compression of the principle of fairness.

The manifestation of fairness extends beyond the balance, equality, and diversity of time and perspectives—it also involves the relationship between fairness and "facts." In a controversial event, if the basis of a particular viewpoint is not clearly grounded in facts, erroneous judgments may be made by the audience regarding the acceptance of both sides' opinions. Furthermore, unverified statements do not require the time and effort of fact-checking, which gives an advantage in argumentation to the party making unsubstantiated claims. This information speed advantage, often stemming from the lack of fact-checking in the competitive landscape of commercial television, frequently leads to unequal treatment of those being reported on or discussed. Therefore, the extent to which something

is factual embodies a specific aspect of fairness.

In addition, for complex or specialized issues, the production units, hosts, and guests of political talk shows can contribute to fairness by providing explanations in a simple and understandable manner. This helps the public to equally grasp different opinions and perspectives. Thus, it may be considered as a manifestation of the fairness principle.

### **III. Production Guidelines**

Production guidelines are the ethical guidelines that media (particularly news media) professionals are expected to follow during the production and broadcasting of programs. These standards fall under the purview of self-regulation. Originally, media regulatory activities within the realm of self-regulation were primarily aimed at protecting concepts such as freedom of speech and media editorial rights. Therefore, production guidelines should be established and adhered to by broadcasting organizations themselves.

However, due to the practical and operational nature of production guidelines, it is evident from the domestic and international cases collected in this study that these standards are not set in stone once established. On the contrary, the behavior of media organizations and media professionals is profoundly influenced by social changes and developments in communications technology. Therefore, the majority of the content within the guidelines actually stems from the media's reflection on their own behavior, ongoing cases, and practical considerations. In other words, production guidelines are subordinate to the media and should possess the characteristic of keeping up with the times.

Therefore, in cases from other countries, it is not unusual to see

thousands of pages of production guidelines (including examples) that have gradually accumulated over the years due to the increasing number of cases. It is also evident that the primary function of the guidelines is to provide media professionals with various "patterns" of appropriate and inappropriate broadcasting behaviors. This study believes that since the value of production guidelines lies in describing and providing corresponding methods for various inappropriate broadcasting behaviors, and it falls within the realm of media self-regulation, its associated effects are best demonstrated in internal media training, internal controls, and responses to complaints. Therefore, this study suggests that the concept of "production guidelines" should be expanded to include the scope of "collection and organization of inappropriate case studies and descriptions of corresponding methods," and it is advisable to collaborate with self-regulatory committees and media legal departments to annually increase the number of exemplary cases.

**Section 2: Dimensions of Fairness Principles of TV Political Talk Shows and referral Production Guidelines of Audience Interaction**

Table 41: Suggested Version of Fairness Principles and Indicators:

	Original Indicators	Implementation Practices
A. Issue	1. When setting the agenda, try to include significant social events as much as possible.	Significant social events refer to issues that are relevant to the public lives of the majority of society. Avoid delving

<p style="text-align: center;">Dimensions</p>	<p>2. Keep the discussion focused on the issue itself rather than solely presenting partisan opposition.</p>	<p>into personal privacy or circulating rumors or gossip.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The decision to discuss significant events and present them as public matters can be reflected in: (1) clear labeling of the topic in the title; (2) opening remarks by the host.</li> <li>2. Clearly state the specific objectives of channels with special missions (such as ethnic channels) and observe whether the discussion topics align with their operational goals.</li> </ol> <p>Observe and explore discussions that encompass different perspectives beyond the differences between political parties.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">B. Guest Composition and Opinions</p>	<p>1. (Single episode programs) Ensure diversity in the identities of invited panelists, avoiding a concentration from a single entity (such as the same political party or organization).</p> <p>(Series programs) When presenting specific</p>	<p>Observe whether the program's depiction of panelists (e.g., on-screen CG) is concentrated within the same group.</p> <p>When presenting diverse opinions in a series program, observe: (1) clear explanation from the broadcast's beginning (starting with the first episode) that different episodes will</p>

<p>viewpoints on different episodes, with each episode featuring only one viewpoint, it should be clearly expressed in the first episode's broadcast.</p>	<p>present different viewpoints. (2) Whether the invited panelists throughout the series program are concentrated within the same group.</p>
<p>2. Verify whether the information provided by invited panelists has been reasonably fact-checked.</p>	<p>Observe whether the principle of fact-checking is clearly stated in the broadcasting guidelines and whether a channel provides a channel for the general public to lodge complaints for corrections.</p> <p>Observe the complaints received by the regulatory authority (National Communications Commission) and the cases of public demands for corrections or complaints recorded by the channel's self-regulatory committee as a basis for verifying whether the program fulfills its responsibility in fact-checking.</p>
<p>3. Based on the nature of the discussion topic, arrange for at least one appropriate panelist with professional knowledge.</p>	<p>During observation, record and identify at least one recognized expert related to the topic being discussed in the current episode. This can be indicated by describing the expert's credentials or expertise in the relevant field.</p> <p>During observation, record the identities of other participants in the</p>

		discussion and assess their relevance to the topic being discussed on that day.
	4. Assist the audience in understanding complex issues by presenting the viewpoints of the panelists in a simple and comprehensible manner.	1. Observe the presence and frequency of specialized terms from various fields, as well as whether they are explained in the program. The explanations can be provided through various means, including but not limited to visual aids such as graphics, case studies, or on-screen CG (computer graphics).
C. Host and Production Team Roles	1. The host provides each guest with equal speaking time, and the production team ensures that guests receive equal presentation time.	The duration of each guest's speaking time is observed in the actual broadcasted videos.  For viewers, regardless of the production process, they only have access to the final broadcasted version. Therefore, the duration of guest speaking time should be considered as a joint presentation by the host and production team, without the need to distinguish whether it is caused by the host or the production team, as it would not create unfairness.
	2. The host assists guests in distinguishing their statements as "facts,"	1. During the observation, the assessment is made to determine whether the host assists the guest in

<p>"opinions," or "commentaries."</p>	<p>distinguishing their statements as "verifiable facts" or "commentary based on a specific viewpoint."</p>
<p>3. The host and production team collect, organize, and present diverse opinions from society to supplement any gaps in the guests' perspectives.</p>	<p>1. For relevant parties or opinion holders who are unable to be present, their opinions can be presented through alternative means. Non-attendance forms of presenting opinions may include, but are not limited to: (1) pre-recorded interview footage, (2) visuals displaying relevant information related to the discussion topic, (3) the host representing and expressing their opinions on their behalf.</p>
<p>4. The host pays attention to the viewpoints of marginalized groups or minority communities and avoids using discriminatory language.</p>	<p>1. During observation, the use of discriminatory language by the host and participants is monitored.</p>

Table 42: Execution Recommendations for Public Participation and Interaction Production Guidelines.

	Original Indicators	Implementation Practices
A. Prior to Broadcast of Program	1. When receiving information from the public, verify the identity of the individuals and ascertain the source of the information.	1. During the broadcast, adopt a real-name system for information provided by the public, and disclose the information source through means such as CG, captions, or statements by the host.
	2. Differentiate between factual and opinion-based materials contributed by the public. Factual information should be based on criteria of public significance for inclusion and disclosure.	1. During the observation, check whether there are methods provided in the visuals or through verbal statements by the host to distinguish between the facts and opinions expressed by the public in their interactive participation.
	3. Information provided by certain viewers should only be disclosed after undergoing diligent and rational verification.	1. During the observation, examine whether the program provides the source of information when "information provided by the public" is presented. If the production unit includes a disclaimer in the form of visual cues or verbal statements by the host while presenting "information provided by the public," it should be considered as a deduction in this aspect.

	<p>4. When broadcasting information provided by the public, include the date and source of the video to provide transparency and context.</p>	<p>1. During the observation, check whether the information provided by the public is accompanied by the date and source of the video.</p>
<p>B. During Program Broadcast</p>	<p>1. Sufficient manpower should be allocated during live programs to conduct real-time fact-checking on the content provided by the public in their interactive participation.</p>	<p>1. During the observation, check whether the credits at the end of the program include the verification personnel.</p>
	<p>2. Real-time fact-checking should be promptly reported to the host, and immediate clarification should be sought during the program.</p>	<p>1. When observing real-time interactive content, examine whether the program responds to the interactive content through on-screen CG or the host's verbal response.</p>
	<p>3. The program host should have a reasonable level of understanding of the factual aspects related to the discussion topics. If there are obvious doubts about the statements made by the guests, they should be raised and clarified</p>	<p>1. During the observation, assess whether the host asks the guests about the factual basis or opinion nature of their statements and inquires about the sources of real-time interactive content.</p>

	immediately.	
	4. Information that cannot be clearly determined should be accompanied by a warning label or verbally cautioned by the host for further investigation. If it pertains to an expression of opinion, the host can remind the audience that it represents the guest's personal opinion.	1. When observing, check whether there are on-screen CG or verbal warnings to indicate information that cannot be determined at the moment.
C. Correction Mechanism	1. During the program broadcast, a mechanism for correction should be provided to uphold the right to correction.	<p>During the observation, check whether the program or channel has a permanent mechanism for corrections and whether it meets the usage habits of different media users (such as the internet or television). Verify if the correction mechanism is clearly stated in the program's visuals.</p> <p>When an error is detected, the specific method of correction should be employed.</p>

<p>2. Corrections should be made timely within the shortest possible timeframe, as well as in a clear and cautious manner.</p>	<p>During the observation, compare the time at which an error occurred with the time it took for the correction to be made.</p> <p>Check whether the correction is made within the shortest possible time frame based on the frequency of the program's broadcast.</p>
<p>3. Corrections should adhere to the principle of "same error, same compensation." This means that the same time and manner in which the error was displayed should be applied to the correction.</p>	<p>1. During the observation, check whether the time and method of error correction are equivalent or identical to when the error occurred.</p>

D. Adjustment	<p>1. Regulations governing production with regard to public engagement and interaction should be adjusted in response to needs.</p> <p>In order to provide guidance for future practitioners, it is advisable to record inappropriate activities by the production unit as part of the broadcasting guidelines, using examples and case studies.</p>	<p>1. During the observation, check whether the broadcasting guidelines incorporate examples and case studies from the previous year, including both self-errors and errors made by others.</p>
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### Section 3: Policy Suggestions

**I. Production guidelines should be established by media organizations based on recommendations from the audience and regulatory authorities, and the self-regulatory mechanism of the industry should play a role in promoting compliance and rectification.**

Based on the principles of encouraging industry self-regulation and safeguarding freedom of speech and editorial rights in political discourse

programs, and considering the diverse nature of actual political program production by television broadcasters, this study asserts that the “Production Guidelines” involving public participation and interaction should be established by the industry itself. These standards can take into account the opinions of the audience and regulatory authorities to ensure that they align with the expectations of the general public. Examining experiences from other countries, it can be noted that when individual broadcasters engage in mutual oversight, the effects can be significant. Therefore, industry self-regulatory organizations, associations, and councils play a crucial role in fostering self-discipline within the industry and should actively contribute to promoting compliance and rectification.

However, considering the practical conditions, this study recommends that regulatory authorities can also play a demonstrative role by providing reference standards for broadcasters to examine and assisting in the establishment of production guidelines that meet the specific needs of individual industry players.

This study argues that when television broadcasters produce political discourse programs, they should establish effective Production Guidelines and exemplary cases based on the specific operational patterns of their own programs (e.g., studio-based programs, outdoor programs, etc.). Therefore, when programs adopt new formats or patterns, the guidelines should also be updated accordingly.

In industry self-regulation standards, other countries have formed associations such as public consortia to enhance self-regulatory mechanisms. This study, after examining measures implemented in other countries, found that in the experience of media governance in the European Union, the concept of "mandatory association membership" implies an obligation for all media organizations to establish or join public consortia. However, this may not fully align with the principles of media self-regulation, as mandatory membership can be seen as a form of external

regulation rather than self-regulation.

This study contends that regulatory authorities should not impose mandatory requirements on media entities to establish or participate in industry associations. However, within the framework of existing established public academy organizations, it is suggested that regulatory bodies utilize these organizations to convey research findings or monitoring outcomes related to media entities. Subsequently, through such a foundation, they can stimulate, coordinate, or prompt media entities to independently make suitable and timely adjustments to production and broadcasting norms and other self-regulatory principles. This approach aims to encourage media entities to engage in continuous self-monitoring and self-regulation based on the regulatory findings disseminated through industry associations.

It is also proposed that regulatory authorities actively collaborate with industry associations through various forms, methods, or procedures to assist media entities in enhancing self-regulation norms:

1. Providing and Interpreting Regulatory Reports
2. Explaining and Interpreting Punitive Cases
3. Inclusion of Regulatory and Internal Control-Related Research Reports in Self-Regulatory Meeting Agendas
4. Encouraging Self-Execution of Indicators by Public Association Organizations

**II. In addition to general provisions, production and broadcasting regulations should also include specific case examples and be updated annually. It is also advisable to refer to exemplary cases from reputable**

**media organizations abroad, benefiting from their experiences and insights.**

This study also suggests that production and broadcasting regulations should not only include general processes and basic standards for each process but also case examples of appropriate or inappropriate behaviors from previous years. These case examples should be updated annually and incorporated into the production and broadcasting regulations. Regulatory authorities can require industry players to develop internal educational training materials based on cases involving complaints and penalties, updating them on a yearly basis to serve as examples. This will help industry players effectively navigate appropriate behaviors in the constantly changing media landscape. In terms of implementation, the case examples compiled by industry players should be publicly disclosed within their respective self-regulatory committees or associations. They can also be submitted to the media literacy training and capacity-building units of broadcasting companies for the planning of relevant courses and discussions, allowing participants to collectively establish guidelines for program production based on discussions of appropriate and inappropriate behavior patterns.

In terms of implementation and reference standards, the enforcement aspect and indicators of broadcasting regulations hold an administrative guidance status in legal terms and do not possess binding force. Looking at practices in other government departments, it is possible to compile a list of past cases that have undergone punitive measures by the National Communications Commission (NCC), criticized by public opinion, or complained about by the public, forming an "Execution Reference Examples for Broadcasting Regulations." The inclusion of examples, cases, and evidence can also assist industry players in understanding various inappropriate patterns.

Additionally, industry players can be encouraged to participate in collective self-regulation mechanisms through industry associations or attend media literacy training and educational programs organized by regulatory authorities. Through these activities, they can refer to or exchange important examples each year, facilitating mutual learning and benefiting from the lessons learned by others.

It is worth noting that some exemplary media organizations, such as NHK and BBC, have accumulated a wealth of cases and examples over the years. These cases and examples often arise from instances where the media mishandled news or talk shows, leading to complaints, penalties, or public discussions. Within these cases, we can observe media organizations reflecting on the root causes of inappropriate behavior and engaging in self-examination or restructuring to address structural issues, such as organizational norms and processes. The discussion and documentation of these normative cases serve as valuable educational and training materials, as they need to be tailored to specific contexts, taking into account public opinion, societal norms, and the media landscape. Therefore, it is recommended that regulatory authorities encourage industry players to refer to annual updated production examples from reputable media organizations of other countries, create internal educational and training materials, and develop discussion cases that are relevant to the media environment and audience preferences in Taiwan, accumulating them over time.

**III. The execution time and scope of implementing indicator inspections should be clearly defined and conducted by a third party using scientific methods and survey techniques (which can be prioritized).**

In order for the "Fairness Principles and Indicators for Political Programs" listed in this chapter to effectively serve their purpose, it is necessary for the regulatory authority to establish a defined period for the implementation of inspection indicators. This should encompass all political programs within the specified timeframe and involve the engagement of an impartial third party to conduct scientific observations. Drawing from the policies of other countries, it is advisable to designate a specific number of days before an election day for the evaluation and assessment of various indicators in political and talk programs broadcast by television broadcasters. The results of these assessments should be made public.

The research suggests that the implementation of indicator inspections should be carried out through a comprehensive survey method to avoid sampling errors. By using a census approach, it becomes possible to assess the performance of all political programs or channels during a specific event, such as a particular election. The fairness principles and indicators for political programs outlined in this chapter, as well as the reference norms for interactive broadcasting involving public participation, should be incorporated into the broadcasters' self-defined production regulations. However, when it comes to the actual implementation of indicator inspections, the regulatory authority should conduct a comprehensive survey of all political programs/talk shows broadcast by television broadcasters. This approach ensures more accuracy by avoiding potential sampling errors and provides an overview of the overall performance of political programs in Taiwan during a specific time period.

However, the implementation of this measure involves policy decisions by the regulatory authority and considerations regarding budget allocation. In practical terms, it is advisable to prioritize the observation of political programs aired during prime time in the mainstream news block within a specific period before an election (e.g., from 7 PM to 10 PM).

Adjustments to the actual scope and methods of implementation should be made based on progressive observations. Additionally, considering the diverse nature and variations in television program production (e.g., street interviews during elections), it is recommended that the implementing unit pays special attention to whether the episodes being examined differ from the usual broadcasting format when conducting investigations and recording data.