

Globalization of Mass Media:

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OPPORTUNITIES
AND CHALLENGES
FOR THE SOUTH

Does the globalization of media and communication help developing countries “leapfrog” into the information age, improve access to technology, speed development, and contribute to global understanding, equality and harmony? Or does it discredit indigenous cultures, knowledge and experience, sometimes proven over centuries, undermine national economic and political independence, and generate worse international disparities? These questions are weighed by Professor Hamid Mowlana, Director of the International Service at The American University.

With the approaching twenty-first century, new technologies and the “information revolution” are bringing our world closer together and making nations, economies and cultures increasingly interdependent. This process of “globalization” is often portrayed as a positive force which is unifying widely different societies, integrating them into a “global village”, and enriching all in the process. It is variously described as an inevitable by-product of human evolution and progress, as if it were an organic process, governed by the laws of nature.

However, globalization is not necessarily a natural progression emerging out of the ordinary communication and interaction of people and cultures around the world. Rather, it results from deliberate human choice by a powerful group of nations, transnational corporations (TNCs) and international organizations which have stakes in the process. The new communications and information technologies have provided methods for large corporations to maximize profits by entering foreign markets. They have also given nation-states reason to re-examine the strategic implications of

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globalization for their national economic and political development.

Globalization is a complex phenomenon, marked by two opposing forces. On the one hand, it is characterized by massive economic expansion and technological innovation. On the other hand, there is increased inequality, cultural and social tumult, and individual alienation. Globalization of mass media is an integral part of this phenomenon and is propelled by the same ideologies, organizations and forces. In turn, the digital revolution and the introduction of new communications technologies are redefining our notions of politics and the structures of power in society. Increasingly, power resides in the hands of those who can produce, control and disseminate information most effectively. Human communication is increasing exponentially in amount and variety and is covering greater distances in shorter time.

This proliferation of communications technologies and the increased global interdependence it creates are often erroneously viewed as directly contributing to global understanding, equality and harmony. However, as many scholars have pointed out, an increase in electronic communication does not necessarily mean an increase in human communication and cooperation. In fact, many suggest that it leads to the replacement of traditional structures such as the family, religion and the community with ones supposedly more relevant to the modern world: the mass media, the nation-state, and the global economy. As these new systems emerge, they in turn reinforce the globalization process and provide channels for governments, transnational corporations and media distributors to communicate and expand their power and resource base. Thus, globalization is both a prerequisite for and a cause of the development of communications industries.

THE MEANING OF GLOBALIZATION

This shift from the “local” to the “global” is being portrayed as an innocuous effect of human progress and beneficial to all involved. For example, the 1993 U.S. Department of Commerce Report on the Globalization of the Mass Media states that liberalization and internationalization of media markets is improving “the economic welfare of all countries” (Department of Commerce: 1993, viii). If we believe this, we tend to see the process as beyond our control and allow corporations and governments to minimize their roles. This particular view, actively perpetuated by transnationals benefiting from the process, guides the forces and strategies directing globalization. Interestingly, both the North and the South see globalization as commercial enterprises increasing their activities across national boundaries, providing opportunities for international trade, and simultaneously spreading their cultural and societal values. This description is accurate, but it does not explore any of

the larger societal and cultural implications for countries in the South, nor the implications for equity and democracy within the industrialized world. The assumption is that such international trade will eventually “trickle down” to individuals.

It has also been suggested that the new communications technologies and media are spreading the existing structures and values which are dominant globally and emphasize the free-market economy and a capitalist liberal democracy. In this perspective, the climate of privatization, deregulation and commercialization which exists in the United States is actively being replicated across the world, in order to facilitate international commercial ventures.

The marked increase in transportation technologies in recent decades has brought increased travel and opportunities for trade. The spread of direct broadcast satellite (DBS) and mass media has also served to break down barriers to communications and international commerce, and to make it more difficult for governments and regulatory bodies to protect their cultures and societies.

What we are observing as a process of globalization may find its roots in the early development projects and theories which emerged at the end of World War II under such international aid programmes as the Marshall Plan. These programmes promoted the process of development which came to be known as modernization. Modernization theory

sees communications and mass media as a necessary precursor to economic growth and social change. This theory also emphasizes the connection between media expansion and institution-building, political stability, and economic growth. Thus, it has helped to perpetuate the widespread assumption that broadcast television and radio helps nations “leapfrog” into the information age. According to this dominant view of nation-building, the mass media are a major component in fostering economic, political and social development. They are cited as methods for helping to spread democratic ideals, increase political participation, create feelings of community, build national unity and loyalty, facilitate informed self-government, and enable participation in the new information society.

This assumed connection between media and development is still governing the development process today, and is now being influenced heavily by the aggressive corporate culture of transnationals. The philosophies, goals and economic approaches of these new commercial enterprises are often entering development agencies and strongly influencing the development process. The new, powerful satellite technology has hastened this process. It gives TNCs the means to bypass national regulations and boundaries and get foreign programming and information into countries which had previously tried to limit foreign messages. As these commercial

enterprises expand their market shares internationally, they are gaining power and influence over governments worldwide, as well as over international regulatory bodies like the ITU, GATT and UN agencies.

At a recent conference at Carleton University in Ottawa, Professor Jeremy Tunstall of the City University of London described the current trend of corporate expansion and market integration. He warned that this process was further centralizing communications industries around the world and impacting the free flow of information around the globe (Tunstall: 1998). Since the 1996 Telecommunications Act was passed in the United States, signifying a huge change in U.S. communications policy, there has been an explosion of transnational mergers and acquisitions. Companies like Disney, Viacom and Time-Warner have diversified their media holdings, bought television networks, movie production houses, cable channels and other media enterprises. Thus, they own both the means of production and distribution, further concentrating the media outlets and the information we receive via the mass media.

Tunstall describes the phenomenon of "Hollyweb". In this process, Hollywood production companies are acquiring television networks, cable channels, and TV stations and are branching out into such areas as theme parks, music production and publishing. The magic word in the U.S. media now is "vertical",

where production and distribution companies are allowed to own these various types of networks, channels and television stations. Here, Washington views its role as supporting the U.S. commercial media, encouraging competition, discouraging the elements of monopoly, and thereby boosting the financial bases of the media in general, and Hollywood in particular. Tunstall views Anglo-American cooperation and alliances as an important step in the development of media conglomerates worldwide; a look at the global television lineup is a case in point (see box below).

Similar patterns of global conglomerates can be seen in the advertising industry, which had annual billings of \$125 billion in 1996. They included such companies as Omnicom Group, WPP Group, Interpublic Group of Companies, Young and Rubicam, True North Communications, Grey Advertising, and Hakuhodo, with corporate headquarters in the U.S., London and Japan.

Globalization of the mass media should also be viewed in the context of its demographic constituencies—an aspect often left to the sidelines in our discourse. Within the next few decades, the populations of China and India combined will constitute almost half of humanity. This demographic shift no doubt will be an important factor in determining the geographical and economic basis of the market, as well as the major conglomerates involved in the mass media. The rapid expansion of the

GLOBAL TELEVISION CONGLOMERATES

Network or outlet subscribers	Corporate entity worldwide	Household
BBC World Network	British Broadcasting Corp.	50 million
Cartoon Network	Time Warner	140.5 million
CNN-International	Time Warner	181.9 million
Discovery Channel	Discovery Communications	125.9 million
ESPN	Walt-Disney Company and Hearst Corporation	250 million
MTV Networks	Viacom	310 million
NBC Network	National Broadcasting Corp.	200 million
Sci-Fi Channel	USA Networks International	59.8 million

mass media is based on the assumption that information is inherently neutral. This idea has been greatly magnified by organizations and companies which have a stake in the globalization process, and it ignores the important role that cultural and social values play in shaping information. The choices made every day by government officials, network executives and media producers and distributors determine what topics are covered, what information is selected and the way it is portrayed. The simple choice of one story over another is as much a political choice as it is economic and professional. It determines what becomes part of our national consciousness and what values and ideas take precedence in the general public. The choices made by the media and their producers are always a function of their own individual beliefs, but, more important, they reflect cultural, societal and national values and identity.

Overwhelmingly, the mass media promise that globalization will bring friendship, harmony and international cooperation. The mass media are viewed as a means to increase diversity, democracy and empower the individual. However, beneath the overly optimistic image of global cooperation and sharing lies a side of globalization which is generally ignored by the media. There are many unintended and unpredicted side-effects of the information revolution and the spread of mass media. Few if any of the early modernization theorists predicted the political apathy, increased alienation and dissolution of community and family life which have been widely noted in the industrialized world. Still, the media are often cited as contributing to increased government transparency and democratic participation by playing the role of a “watch-dog”, pressuring politicians and other leaders into being

accountable to their fellow citizens.

Despite this continuing faith in the positive impact of the media, many people are becoming cynical and apathetic about the impact of media and their role in society. The press appears to be losing credibility, and is often criticized as overly preoccupied with appearances, celebrity and wealth, as well as generating new media factions, such as the tabloid press, or the "stalkarazzi". More important, there is concern emerging over the freedom of the press, and many believe it to be subject to manipulation by government, advertising, and other powerful institutions in society. And yet, globalization is often portrayed as a way to increase the diversity and the richness of our culture by adding to the variety of information circulating in the media outlets. It is assumed that the more television channels we have, the more diverse is the information we receive.

However, this idea is grossly exaggerated at best, as the global media are often dominated by western products and Hollywood values. The information transmitted through American television and movies is mostly "info-tainment" and advertising. The promises that the mass media transmit information necessary for improved political participation and socio-economic development are increasingly seen with skepticism. In the United States, many people complain of a startling lack of diversity on television and in the print media. In fact, the proliferation of tele-

vision and cable channels which was supposed to generate variety and consumer choice has churned out an astounding number of programmes on a surprisingly small range of topics. The media portray a very limited and excessively violent view of the world.

There is a type of "silent censorship", where centralization has limited the information able to penetrate through the media gatekeepers. This concentration of media control has also allowed for very few criticisms of the establishment in the media. Criticizing the dominant view of globalization and rapid commercial and technological expansion, or suggesting alternatives, is portrayed as reactionary or "un-business". In fact, communications scholars have found that in the industrialized world, there is a growing dependence on media which is proving to be quite harmful. There seems to be an almost blind faith in "the new", "the modern" and technological solutions to problems, and a subsequent devaluing of traditional values and structures, no matter how valuable they have proved to be over centuries. People are surprisingly quick to reject their indigenous traditions and cultural values as reactionary, static and irrelevant to their lives. Instead, they turn to global television, MTV and Coca-Cola (Mowlana: 1996, 108) and place high value on foreign innovation, commercial products and experts.

The most prevalent assumption underlying the process of globalization is that

an unfettered free market, fierce competition between companies, and a free flow of information will deliver the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Adam Smith's "invisible hand" is supposed to determine the flow of information and the future path of the world economy. However, this idea has been transformed to mean the free flow of commercial information and expression. Since the sole motivation of transnational corporations is to maximize their profits and build demand for their products and services, should commercial expression and advertising be the only kind allowed to flourish and to flow freely? Should economic efficiency be our highest priority, and does corporate competition deliver the greatest good for individuals?

David Korten, President of the People-Centered Development Forum in the United States, suggests that we re-examine Adam Smith's notion of the free market as applied to the global flow of information and communications to more accurately reflect the reality of our global village. Smith's vision emerged in a much different world, where small, locally-owned businesses were encouraged to flourish and compete with each other to be responsive to the needs of individuals in the community. Today, businesses, government structures and international agencies have become so large that they are no longer directly responsive and accountable to the needs and desires of the people they are sup-

posed to serve (Korten: 1996, 187). As the media continue to centralize, while simultaneously serving a wider audience, it becomes more difficult for the individual to influence the substance and the systems through which information is produced and distributed. Thus, Korten warns, individuals have less ability to impact the policies, goals and directions of their social, economic and political institutions (Korten: 1996, 186).

GLOBALIZATION AND MEDIA POLICIES IN THE NORTH

According to the 1993 U.S. Department of Commerce report on the globalization of the mass media, the United States has a marked advantage in this process, and is having a remarkable impact in the liberalization of markets internationally (U.S. Department of Commerce: 1993, 3). In fact, Joseph Nye, Director of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and former advisor to the Clinton Administration, cites that America's "information edge" has granted it the position of world leader, and predicts that this edge will make the twenty-first century "America's century" (Nye: 1996, 21).

Ironically, however, communications policies in the United States are surprisingly protectionist, considering the vehement advocacy in the U.S. for an unfettered global free market. Less than 2 per cent of American television is foreign. Exports of American television, film and video products are \$2.1 billion dollars

greater than U.S. imports of foreign cultural products (U.S. Department of Commerce: 1993, viii). Communication policies are stringent regarding foreign penetration into the domestic market. The communications acts of 1912 and 1927 installed strict regulations on foreign ownership of broadcast and other communications industries in order to protect American national integrity and security. The FCC did not grant licenses to companies whose parent companies were more than 25 per cent foreign-owned. It is ironic that today, when other governments have such policies, the U.S. government describes them as protectionist and xenophobic, and encourages other governments to move more towards a free-market economy.

The new world information and communications order today is being "liberalized" at an unprecedented rate in the U.S. and in the South. Since 1988, there has been an explosion of transnational mergers and acquisitions. In 1996, a new communications act was passed in the U.S. government. It relaxed regulations so as to encourage the convergence of the telecommunication, computer, and television industries, creating the so-called National Information Infrastructure (NII) or "information superhighway". This was followed by the Global Information Infrastructure (GII) of the European Union, which in great part replicated the framework of NII. This convergence of technologies and alliances means that the prevailing information infrastructure is

designed mainly by a small number of sources—and this process of vertical integration is a central part of globalization.

The globalization of international markets and the power of U.S. communication industries are generating increased concern around the world about issues of cultural sovereignty and the right to self-determination. An example from the realm of cultural industries, publishing, illustrates the nature of the phenomenon of globalization. While book production has increased 40 per cent worldwide from 1983 to 1994, there is still a severe shortage of educational and scholarly texts in much of the world (Mowlana: 1997a, 91-2). For example, due to this inequality, countries of the South import much of their materials from the industrialized nations. Not only are the materials reaching the South limited, but the texts chosen for publishing in the U.S. are severely limited by their marketing potential (Binder: 1996, 35). Diversity is lacking in published works because the large conglomerates controlling the industry do not have competition. To further complicate the issue, chain bookstores have the market power to dictate the nonscholarly texts available, giving them influence over the publishing houses. Similarly, television and film distribution are managed by large conglomerates which create marketable, not necessarily quality, material.

Many countries in the North, including France and Canada, as well as nations of the South such as Indonesia

and Singapore, are looking for communications policies which will ensure the national integrity and unity of their nations. For example, Canada's communications policies have been concerned with issues of cultural, linguistic and national identity and diversity for decades because its population is very multicultural and spread over a large geographic area. The government has participated directly in the media since broadcasting began in the early 1920s, on the premise that political sovereignty and unity are directly linked to communications and culture. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) was founded to promote Canadian identity and community, despite cultural and linguistic differences.

Unlike the American "melting pot" concept, Canadian policies were designed not only to promote national unity, but also to strengthen and validate the myriad cultural backgrounds present in Canada. There has been continued government support and funding for the mass media and cultural production. All media are expected to have at least 64 per cent "Canadian" content, and there are policies to make the media more representative of Canada's diverse population, including women, Francophones, indigenous people and other minorities.

However, the multicultural policies have been nearly impossible to enforce and had negligible impact on mainstream media. Creating separate French and English communications industries

has not built bilingual national identity, but two separate identities. Flourishing Quebec media and cultural industries have strengthened Quebec culture, nationalism and identity, but also deepened Anglophone/Francophone divisions, perhaps contributing to the dramatic referendum in 1996.

Canada is not alone in its response to globalization and its search for self-determination. Time has proven that commercial mass media rarely meet the needs of all people, especially minorities. Laws and policies governing communications must allow the creation of a space for those not represented in mainstream media. The United Nations World Television Forum in November 1997 warned that mainstream programming must take into account the constantly changing demographics of our world and address both majority and minority interests. Because commercial media take mass appeal and economic incentives as main determinants of what they programme, they will rarely reflect the far more complex and diverse needs of smaller groups and individuals.

The European Union's audiovisual policy issued in 1989 was another instance of reaction to globalization. The policy included three steps—to promote national and regional broadcasting, foster European communications capabilities, and serve as guarding principles against the onslaught of the American media. Following the EC directives, France acted to aid the

French movie industry with subsidies, protect it from the American influence, and impose quotas on American audiovisual products. French officials claimed they were, in essence, preserving and protecting French culture. This debate was also carried into trade negotiations in the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), now the World Trade Organization (WTO), as a contentious matter between the U.S. and France. The tension between the two parties was resolved only by accepting the French demand for “cultural exception” of any audiovisual trade from WTO rules (Singer: 1994, 55).

GLOBALIZATION AND THE RESPONSE OF THE SOUTH

Against the new backdrop of globalization and development of mass media, the South faces both opportunities and challenges. These may best be examined by tracing the four trends of (1) ethnicization of mass media, (2) development of alternative media, (3) design of comprehensive policies, and (4) internationalization of the mass media within the South. Many countries in the South are concerned with bolstering their national identity and strengthening their role in the globalization of media and technology. They recognize that information and communications are increasingly the source of power in our world today, and those who cannot compete effectively in the communications and information sectors will suffer both economically and culturally.

Indonesia, which launched its own communications satellite in the 1960s, is a case in point. The Indonesian government not only desired to use satellite technology for its telecommunications infrastructure, but wanted to minimize as much as possible the impact of foreign, particularly western, broadcast television on its population. In response to global economic pressures, the Indonesian government began to privatize communications industries, seemingly to improve communication contents and infrastructure. However, these steps did not necessarily improve democratic participation, as demonstrated by the events of the early part of 1998. Indonesian television and radio industries came to be run by the government, and thus came to serve as a means of reinforcing the status quo (Beng-Huat: 1997, 242).

The process of globalization is also leading to change in the very nature of communication in societies where traditional media were the sole means of communication. In a small Kazakh village (Werner: 1997), social relationships were built on the giving and receiving of gifts (such as camels, sheep, cars) and attendance at feasts. These displays of generosity, often in excess, were part of the social structure based upon reciprocity, and contributed to strong family ties, social networks and communication. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the advent of privatization and capitalism brought a sharp drop in village living standards, a decline in traditional

gift-giving, simultaneous straining of older social networks, and a breakdown of traditional communication channels. As a result, the Kazakhs as described above, as well as a plethora of other ethnic groups across the globe, are having to adapt and create new modes of communication as globalization continues to lessen cultural isolation.

The systems governing communications today, though varied, are mainly those seeking to maximize profits, leading to increased dependence on consumer products. At the same time, there is an increased call by individuals to foster community, cultural integrity and human cooperation and understanding. International bodies and institutions, such as ITU and WTO, which govern communications and information industries and shape the future of the information society, are increasingly pressured by corporations and trade lobbies. At the same time, the new Global Information Infrastructure, which is being designed and promoted by industrialized countries, has not taken into account the particular needs of countries in the South. Indeed, many nations in the South are discouraged that they are not being consulted on such far-reaching decisions at the global level.

EMERGING THEMES IN THE SOUTH

The response of the South to the process of media globalization is varied. The historical experience, level of communication infrastructure, and political and cul-

tural system of each country have an important influence on how it might react and adapt to globalization of the media. Over the last several years, a number of trends have emerged within the South which may profoundly impact the way the South responds to this worldwide phenomenon. These emerging themes, which result from individual reactions and the responses of private and governmental sectors to globalization, may be summarized as follows:

Ethnicization of mass media in face of globalization

With immigration and international travel now a recognized facet in the social landscape of many industrialized nations, communication and media flows are exhibiting new patterns as compared to a few decades ago. Immigrant workers in the North had typically stayed together in certain geographical regions of their host countries. However, socio-political and cultural factors in their host countries have led immigrant communities to become more dispersed. Thus, meeting their cultural needs is increasingly a task for television and radio broadcasting, among other methods, with technology and market economics aiding the phenomenon. In fact, advances in technology coupled with globalization are now even making it possible for broadcasters from outside the host country to reach these specific audience segments.

A good example of this phenomenon

of ethnicized media is given in a study on the rise of Turkish media culture in Germany (Becker: 1997). Since the early 1990s, the Turkish state-run station, TRT-International, has provided a flow of programming into Germany, targeted to approximately 2 million Turkish migrants in the country. This was facilitated by satellite and as part of German cable TV systems. As a result, TRT is the most watched service among immigrants in Germany, and research shows that fewer and fewer Turkish migrant viewers switch over to German TV stations. This gave rise to an interesting reverse flow when, in April 1996, TRT-International asked Turks in Germany to donate money to help the Turkish government protect its borders.

In Australia, many immigrant populations are using community programming as a way of reinforcing their cultural identities, maintaining their ties to their homeland, and constantly renegotiating their role in Australian society. These include significant groups of Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese and Indian people. Since mainstream media and communications policy in Australia do not cater to the diverse needs and interests of this multicultural population, such communities are using small-scale production to produce and disseminate their own programs. In addition, they rely on pay and satellite television to access programming from their native countries.

India boasts the largest film industry in the world and exports its films and cul-

tural products to many of its nationals living abroad, including those in Australia and Fiji. In both countries, Indian communities have created an “ecology of communications”, using film and other Indian cultural products as a center for community life and daily activities. Film stars are invited to appear, and community activities and events are organized around Indian films and videos.

Reaching language minorities inside a developing country also takes special effort and leads to ethnicization of media. In India, broadcasting through the Indian National Satellite (INSAT) has achieved a multilingual mix in the programming carried by networks. These programmes reach linguistic minorities within India’s own population, large numbers of immigrants residing in the country, and even speakers of those same languages who live in neighboring countries. In South Africa, with the rapid growth of broadcasting services since 1995, a number of broadcasters are purchasing imported news from abroad to cater to language minorities.

Alternative media

As a counter to the spread and overarching reach of global media corporations over the past few decades, some countries are promoting and making increased investments in local, indigenous programming. “Alternative media” and community programming have developed and grown.

This counter-trend is particularly

evident in Latin American countries in response to the rise in imported broadcast programmes. Many countries, including Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador and Venezuela, are imposing restrictions on imports and requiring television stations to carry a certain percentage of domestic programming, ranging from 20 to 60 per cent of total programming.

Alternative media, especially community radio and television, provide grassroots communication outlets which trace their origins back to the link between radio and education. During the 1970s and 1980s, local and university stations gave impetus to community radio and TV movements. Particularly notable about the community stations in Latin America is that they are being developed by nonprofit and civic organizations and are promoting the notion of civil society.

With their success and acceptance in the socio-cultural context, community media have begun demanding and obtaining legislative action to give them legal status. This groundswell has come mainly from radio-based media, and in the near future the same standing could be extended to television. For example, in Columbia, community radio transmitters of up to 500 watts are permitted, and their programmes may carry advertising but not political propaganda. Chile also allows community radio stations, though only up to 1 kilowatt of maximum power, but no advertising. In Ecuador, the maximum permitted wattage is 150 watts for FM, 250 watts

for AM. In Bolivia, radio transmitters and inexpensive community-bought radios serve the needs of the poor in an urban slum. Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and other countries are also framing legislation that would recognize the role of community media. Some consider that Mexico's initiative for setting up "citizen radio and television" is one of the most promising initiatives in the field (Roncagliolo: 1997, 221).

As compared to the community media approach in Latin America countries, the battle for audience attention is also being waged on a commercial and market economy basis in many countries of the South. In India, for example, the state-run television organization, Doordarshan, is competing with the private channels for viewers whose number has swollen from 17 million to over 300 million in less than 15 years. The private channels, such as Star TV and Zee TV, are all based outside India since Indian law does not allow private broadcasting from an Indian base. India has seen a spurt in production of television programming by private companies which have chosen "...less-known subjects, classic stories of various languages and characters, and have adopted innovative methods for their productions..." (Agrawal: 1997, 149).

In short, the rise of alternative media signals the empowerment of the communities of South in expressing their opinions and needs by using modern technologies to obtain their participation in the public sphere.

Designing comprehensive media policies

The globalization of communications and media is spurring a new recognition by countries of the South. They are facing issues and concerns similar to those expressed in the 1970s and 1980s debate on a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO). But these questions are arising in a much more complex manner than they could have been imagined back then. The pace, style and technology of globalization is forcing Southern countries to take a hard look at their media and communication policies and a more comprehensive approach to their formulation, seeking to move faster in trying to match the aspirations of their peoples.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one nation which has taken a holistic view of communication policy ever since the NWICO era and its national revolution. Its policy emphasizes self-reliance and an unwillingness to submit to the supply-demand formula of the international market. This policy is carried through by organizational, investment and programming measures. The importance of television is enshrined in the 1979 constitution, which gave it an independent organization outside any single ministry. Particular attention goes to public broadcasting, and there is extensive investment in the expansion of locally produced programs. The national television system, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), was reorganized in 1979

and now has four major national channels which cover an audience of 30 million out of a population of 60 million. There has been a vast increase in domestic programming and a considerable reduction in dependency on foreign materials. In 1991, 85 per cent of all television programs were produced domestically (Mowlana: 1997 b, 205). News information and documentaries are prepared within the Islamic community framework, thus ensuring a comprehensive approach to communication.

India has been designing policies to empower and strengthen the indigenous communication and media sectors. A Broadcasting Bill in 1997 established an independent Broadcasting Authority of India to facilitate and regulate broadcast services. Also, the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990, which came into force in 1997, shows that "...at last the Indian electronic media are truly moving towards the creation of an autonomous, independent and responsible broadcasting structure to meet the information needs and entertainment expectations of television viewers in a democratic country" (Agrawal: 1997, 144).

India's communication plans are extensive, and its advances in satellite technology have helped expand television rapidly. The NWICO years saw India developing satellite capacities. By 1982, the Indian National Satellite (INSAT) system was becoming fully operational, and color transmissions were introduced.

The expansion of the Indian TV network started with the “install one transmitter a day” philosophy, and about 1,000 terrestrial transmitters are in operation today. With TV placing primary focus on development, the prime advertising spots (apart from commercials) are taken by public information services which provide development messages related to agriculture, health, education, and other initiatives by the government. National and regional services broadcast primary, secondary and post-secondary learning programmes. An elaborate infrastructure of production facilities has been created in various states, and within the university system for producing higher education programmes. Television is also being used by over half-a-dozen open universities with their own production facilities. India has successfully maintained control of its national communication policy and planning in technology areas by mandating 51 computer-related technologies and supporting the development of national technological industries.

Internationalization of media within the South

The South particularly views its dependence on foreign firms and transnational actors as evidence that the important basis for national decision-making is now located outside its national boundaries. To remedy this situation and depending on the resources and infrastructures available within the South, a number of countries in Latin America

and the Middle East have succeeded in developing and extending their mass media systems, in particular television, beyond their national boundaries into areas with shared language and cultural characteristics. This phenomenon is occurring within the trend toward commercialization and privatization of public communication in the two regions.

In Latin America, for example, a number of major changes have occurred in the traditional organizations of the mass media industries. The television industry in Latin America is becoming more complex, more diversified and more transnational. The changes are most significant in countries with the largest private media conglomerates, principally Mexico and Brazil.

However, on a smaller scale, similar patterns of diversification, growth, and internationalization can be found in other countries of the region. In Mexico, Televisa is now a complex and diversified transnational company. Its holdings include four television channels, cable companies, and a number of smaller production and distribution firms. It produces and disseminates the largest amount of Spanish language television programs around the world. Its soap-opera series reach as far as Russia, where they are dubbed into local languages. In Brazil, Globo Television covers virtually all of Brazil's regions, as well as a vast international market network throughout Latin America as well as in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and Europe.

In Venezuela, Radio Caracas Television is a major supplier of programming throughout Latin America. It has entered the United States market through Univision, and has its own programming sales company in Miami.

Transnational activities of the media can also be observed in the Arab region of the Middle East. Countries with high oil revenues in the Arab world have absorbed many new communication technologies, satellite infrastructures and other telecommunications innovations. The collective resources of the region have enabled it to invest in such systems as Arabsat and Arab League regional satellite systems. Arabsat offers a range of services, with a footprint reaching from the Atlantic coast of west Africa right across to the Indian Ocean. During the last decade, a number of Arab-owned conglomerates, often with headquarters in European countries, have used these facilities to launch major television broadcasting and newspaper enterprises. During the last 20 years, London has become the major center of Arab newspaper and magazine publishing, with distribution to Arab countries and the world market. Internationalization of media in the Arab world includes the production of paper, radio and television receivers, printing inks and related equipment, telephone instruments, antennas, and numerous other products. For example, Egyptian film and cinema production has historically been in the forefront of media

development in the Arab world and has received considerable support during the last several years. The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) considers these industries to be a foundation of what it calls the region's cultural security.

India, traditionally a major center of film and cinema production, has already added a number of related enterprises, including video technology. It has also aggressively accelerated production, dissemination and marketing of its films to South Asia and the Middle East, especially the Arab world. Capital from the rich Arab world has been invested in India's film-making and video businesses. In addition, India has been active in the development of its advertising industry and expanding its techniques and know-how to the Gulf region, where privatization of industry and commerce has been most pronounced over the last few decades.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, globalization is a complex phenomenon, a dialectic which elicits very different reactions from individuals, nations and cultures around the world. It is a result of the expansion of international business and a liberalization of economic, communications and political policies worldwide. It has resulted in a complicated interaction between "globalism" and "localism", where huge corporations are selling products across national boundaries and creating a glob-

ally homogeneous culture of consumption. In addition, globalization is resulting in economic growth in many countries and is presenting new opportunities for trade, individual empowerment and cultural integrity internationally.

The dynamic between these two forces in future will depend on the balance between regulations governing economic expansion, communications integration and cultural sovereignty, as well as the ever-changing relationship between governments, international organizations, corporations and individuals. Although globalization appears to play a central role in our collective future, it is uncertain how it will be affected by grassroots movements and alternatives present in the South and within the industrialized countries. However, innovations in consumer technologies and the marked decrease in production technologies, such as low-cost video, Internet, and computers, have the potential to enhance individual freedom, widen opportunities for countries in the South, and increase democratic participation in communications and the media.

The debate on communications and media issues in the last several decades should stimulate governments and private sectors in the South to adopt comprehensive national information and communication policies to respond to problems brought out by advances in telecommunications technologies and the process of globalization. ■

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