

- Whose problem is it?
- What new problems might be created because we live in a 'media rich' society?
- Which people and what institutions might be most seriously harmed by new media developments?
- What changes in society and culture are being enforced by the globalization of the media and their practices?
- What sort of people and institutions acquire special economic and political power from new communication technologies?

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• Exploring the African view of the global

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We demand zero tolerance of violence against journalists and press freedom. But today more subtle threats to freedom of expression come from within media as a result of media concentration, globalization and a culture of greed within the industry.

(International Federation of Journalists, May 2001)

This brief intervention advances the view that the emerging 'global media condition' undermines rather than promotes the freedom of the media in Africa and other developing regions. For Africa, the current world communication system is 'an outgrowth of prior colonial patterns reflecting commercial and market imperatives' (McPhail, 2002: 9). The

global expansion of the media in Africa is an outgrowth of colonial capitalism, which dates back to the 19th century. Rønning notes that media culture is transnational: it operates on a global scale, and is being produced by transnational media-conglomerates (1997:13–15). The logic of media is linked with the logic of transnational capital (1997: 13).

The themes and concerns of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) are relevant in understanding the African predicament. Under current global conditions, and arising from liberalization and privatization programmes orchestrated by the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the African communication and mass media environment has become more market driven and profit oriented. The public-service role of the African media has largely been sidelined by an upsurge of commercial imperatives. Africa needs to wake up to the challenges raised by the global condition by establishing dynamic communication policies that are able not only to negotiate and repel hostile global media forces but also to service the needs of the majority of Africans.

To apprehend the predicament of Africa in the unfolding global media framework, one can invoke what Claude G. Mararike, a Zimbabwean sociology lecturer, calls the African philosophy of 'kudyiswa' (Shona), 'ukudhliswa' in Ndebele, 'guthaiga' in Gukuyu, or 'miti' in Kikamba – all of which are African terms that refer to 'a practice by some women in Africa who use a concoction of bad medicinal herbs to exert control over their husbands and take over the affairs of the home' (1998: 89–95). The medicine is not supposed to cause death or serious illness but makes the husband slow in thinking and sluggish in movement, with the result that he is at the mercy of his wife, her relatives and friends (Mararike, 1998: 89). The wife's objective is to create a 'client' out of the husband – a client who is 'subservient and serviceable to the wife's interest and agenda' (Mararike, 1998: 90).

The 'kudyiswa' hypothesis has an analogy with the way global forces of media and commerce court Africa through the aid of powerful global institutions (notably the IMF, WTO and WB) using various stages which leave Africans in a weaker position – at the 'mercy' of global media giants such as News Corporation (with 2003 revenues of \$17.5 billion), General Electric (\$134.2 billion), Viacom (\$26.6 billion), Time-Warner (\$39.6 billion), Walt Disney (\$28.4 billion), Vivendi Universal (\$30.1 billion) and Bertelsmann (\$19.8 billion). Most of these global conglomerates are owned and headquartered in the United States and Europe, from where they spread their tentacles in African advertising, book publishing, newspapers and broadcasting.

According to Mararike (1998), 'powerful organisations (represented in the "kudyiswa" hypothesis by the wife) construct the world in which we live. For example, the client "Third World", is "socially constructed" prior to the powerful organisation's interaction with it' (p. 90). Western media organizations, such as Reuters, Agence France Press, Associated Press, Cable News Network, British Broadcasting Corporation and Voice of America *provide the categories* with which decisions and resource allocation by the WB, IMF and WTO are based. The 'kudyiswa' process practised by Western-led global media approaches, he argues, puts Africa in a clientele position.

Africa itself has not taken full advantage of the rapid development of new communications technologies and digitization to produce its own media giants. Most African countries solely rely on terrestrial broadcasting, although some, such as Cameroon and Mozambique, now also use the capital-intensive cable television format. Satellites are capital intensive but offer a cost effective way of reaching large audiences and they cannot be tightly controlled by African governments.

MultiChoice DSTV, an African digital multichannel TV service is the first pay-TV platform in sub-Saharan Africa. It grew from M-Net, a single channel pay-TV service that was set up in South Africa in 1986. By 2002, MultiChoice was providing 55 TV channels and over 40 audio channels for a monthly subscription of \$45. MultiChoice Africa is one of the few African companies that has had a global impact. In 2002, as part of the international MIH group, it traded on the Johannesburg, New York and Amsterdam stock exchanges, with over 2.1 million subscribers in Africa, Middle East and Thailand. MIH turned over \$644 million in the year ending 31 March 2002 (Honeyman, 2003: 78). Other notable African television ventures include Vivid, a pay-TV platform set up by Sentech, the South African state-owned common signal carrier. Vivid carries free-to-air South African services.

Global media giants have also taken advantage of the lack of big time players on the African media scene. In 2002, the French government-owned Canal France International (CFI) initiated Le Sat as a pay-TV platform for a selection of French channels: by mid-2002, 12 channels were on offer with 85,000 subscribers in Africa (Honeyman, 2003: 79).

In addition, three free-to-air African television networks are delivered by satellite to local African television stations, which then broadcast the channels in whole or part. These networks are: CFI Professional, which styles itself a programme bank; Africa Broadcast Network (ABN), which grew from programme distributor ABC; and TV Africa, which received financial backing from the International Financial

Corporation in 2001. The latter two networks seek income from international advertisers, while their local partners seek advertising from local clients (Honeyman, 2003: 80).

In 2003, ABN broadcast one-hour pre-packaged programmes, typically consisting of American comedies, to Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria and Tanzania. The commercial justification for the establishment of content providers such as ABN, according to Honeyman (2003), is that 'many African countries cannot afford to purchase quality (read American) programmes, or to sustain any programming consistency' (p. 80). TV Africa's economic rationale is similar to that of ABN as it is also a carrier of foreign (American and European) sport and entertainment content into Africa.

Geoffrey Reeves (1993) reminds us that:

The extremely asymmetrical flow of communications materials and cultural commodities between the advanced capitalist countries and those of the 'Third World' is not simply a commercial exchange, but rather a part of the process whereby the latter are dominated by the communications ideologies of the major capitalist countries. Also integral to this process is the incorporation of these countries into market-oriented, consumer-capitalist economies through apparently neutral or harmless media products. (p. 31)

From these examples, it is important for Africans to ask whether forces of global media and commerce represent a threat or an opportunity to the continent. In answering the question, one can partly echo Morris and Waisbord's (2001) observation that global media and commercial expansion, 'facilitated by liberalization and privatization of media systems worldwide and the developed cable and satellite technologies', have reduced (African) 'states' ability to exercise power and maintain full sovereignty' (p. ix).

Africanist scholars such as Tafataona Mahoso (2002), of Zimbabwe, see a link between Western imperialism and global mass media when it comes to Africa. Mahoso argues that despite claims of pluralism and diversity, the views of global media misrepresent and mobilize to defeat the interests of the majority of Africans. In the case of Zimbabwe, there has been unanimous agreement among Western governments, global financial institutions, Northern NGOs, global mass media, local corporate media, opposition parties and some missionary-dominated churches that the land-hungry African majority may not respond to their deprivation and poverty by mobilizing to retake the land. Instead, they must wait another 10 years for major donors to convene more conferences to raise funds for compensating those who stole the land; they must wait for more experts to put together a perfect and comprehensive land

resettlement programme; and they must be willing to fight in court for every hectare which the white settlers refuse to sell or surrender voluntarily. This process is dubbed 'the rule of law'.

The erosion of sovereignty of African governments benefits global oligopolies. As noted by Mahoso (2002):

The global oligopolies are the biggest beneficiaries of this orthodox framing but major western governments also benefit because they see the ideological role of the media in support of the oligopolies as helping to make their own national economies grow at the expense of those of the South and the East which are targets of the alliance. (p. 1)

Transnational global media forces impact on diversity, accountability and plurality in the African mass media environment and also undermine various African democratic processes. In this regard Cees Hamelink (1995) has concluded that:

World communication affects [read African] people's daily lives and the most important trends in world communication converge towards people's disempowerment. They make people powerless vis-à-vis the control over their own lives. They create a culture of silence in which people become beings for others. Disempowerment matters since it represents a basic violation of human rights. (p. 148)

How can Africa get out of this predicament? Should Africa turn its back on the former colonial powers when it comes to media equipment, funding, training and content? Should Africa shut its doors to the IMF, the WB and WTO, and other organizations that call for the liberalization and privatization of the African media sectors?

The 'kudyiswa' hypothesis brings out a number of lessons which Africa must follow to free itself from being used to fulfil Western agendas engineered by powerful Western development (and global media) organizations (Mararike, 1998: 93). It is cynical that Africans' response to the global is to set up continental content-providers that peddle foreign programmes rather than promote local productions. In Africa and other developing regions of the world what is needed is people's self-empowerment on a global scale. This means that local communities must reach beyond the borders of their local space and jointly create a global public sphere in which people can freely express themselves, share information, opinions, ideas, and cultural experiences, challenge the accountability of power holders, and take responsibility for the quality of our 'secondary environment'. For our common future a major global civil initiative in the arena of world communication is critical (Hamelink, 1995: 149).

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• Media globalization: an Indian perspective

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It is no exaggeration to say that the 1990s have been quite crucial to the transformation of Indian media networks and industries. Bear in mind that the Indian media scene for a long time was largely limited to national boundaries and one that closely followed the old cartographic imagination of Indian nationalism. To be sure, Indian cinema had dynamic regional distribution networks in Africa, South East Asia, the USSR and the Middle East, but here the cultural transmission of the Hindi film far outweighed any serious economic returns comparable to Hollywood, or what was to come in the 1990s. Television only took off after the 1980s, with a large state network that crisscrossed the country. The 1980s were in fact important dress rehearsals for the next decade, while the state network created a large new television viewing public,