

Continuing Media Controversies

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John Merrill, ed.
Global Journalism
New York: Longman
1995

THREE RECURRENT THEMES IN CONTEXT

Negative media content, monopoly control of the technologies of communication, and an imbalanced information current have been three continuing controversial issues in international communication, beginning with the creation of the European telegraph system in the mid-1800s through the conclusion of the European Union Tariffs and Trade in late 1993, which restricts U.S. movie imports in the European Community, and the inauguration of a U.S. administration plan to propose legislation for a national "information superhighway" in 1994. The nations, the organizations, and the media have changed, but these three themes have persisted in various incarnations and developments throughout this century and a half of international mass communication.

Often, the attempt to change the existing information order is exclusively associated with a highly charged and polarized debate in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the late 1970s and early 1980s over the merits of a "new international information order," also known as the New World Information Order (NWIO) and the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Both proponents of the NWIO in UNESCO—mostly from newly liberated countries in the third world, socialist countries, and Western media critics—and NWIO's opponents—including mostly Western nations and their media—considered this to be a "new" and unique attempt. The U.S. media and, to a lesser degree, the U.S. government categorically attacked any attempt to change the structure of the Western-dominated global media system.

Often, all attempts to change the information order are declared dead, having died when the United States withdrew from UNESCO and the new information order de-

bate in 1985. This misunderstanding, however, ignores the continuing struggle to negotiate the structures and content of international communication that predates the UNESCO debate by more than a century and succeeds it by almost a decade. While the players have shifted, even reversing roles, as the Associated Press (AP) and the United States have done, the issues largely remain intact and unresolved.

BEFORE AND SINCE THE NEW INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION ORDER DEBATE

Long before the new world information order debate, the invention of the telegraph led to the European-based International Telegraph Union in the 1860s, which was transformed into the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in the 1930s. After World War I, the League of Nations called on the press and radio to help preserve world peace. Between the wars, the United States' strongest news service, the AP, complained about the negative effects of global news flow controlled by the European news cartel of three news agencies, Germany's Wolff, France's Havas, and Britain's Reuters. The United Nations (UN), newly created after World War II, developed a series of resolutions calling for freedom of communication as a human right, culminating in the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Also in the 1940s, a nongovernmental U.S. group, the Commission on Freedom of the Press, known as the Hutchins Commission, advocated changes in the media to make them more responsible. And the U.S. Commission on Civil Disorders, or the Kerner Commission, noted the failure of American media to cover minorities in the United States in the 1960s.

Since the United States withdrew from UNESCO and the polarized new world information order debate subsided, the UN has continued to address some of the same issues between the rich industrial countries of the northern hemisphere and the poor countries of the southern hemisphere. Scholars have studied the aftermath of the debate, finding both biased U.S. media coverage of the debate (Giffard 1989) and distorted information presented in communication textbooks in the United States (Roach 1993). It appeared in early 1994 that the United States would rejoin UNESCO in 1995.

Much of the debate over international content, control, and current, however, has shifted to concerns about the cultural impact of American media and transnational media corporation programming on other industrialized countries in North America and Europe, especially as public media in those countries are commercialized and privatized. The recently concluded General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) included provisions by the French, for example, to protect their movie industry. Other Western countries have initiated domestic programming quotas. The U.S. government proposal for an information superhighway, unveiled in 1993, had within a few months given rise to concern among groups such as the MacBride Round Table, a nongovernmental body meeting annually since 1989 to carry on the work of UNESCO's MacBride Commission and its seminal work on global communication, *Many Voices, One World*

(MacBride et al. 1980). The 1995 round table will focus on the global effects and implications of the information superhighway.

NEGOTIATING INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPH COMMUNICATION IN THE 1800s

With the growth of a viable international communication system beginning with the telegraph in 1837, underwater cable in 1866, the telephone in 1876, the wireless in 1897, and radio in 1907—which were all used in the formation of the global European empires—the problem of negotiating telegraph content, control, and current began in the mid-1800s. The initial nations involved were Western European governments that formed the International Telegraph Union in 1865. This group set technical interconnection standards among national telegraph services, set mechanisms for tariffs and sharing revenue across borders, and ensured privacy of messages. An international working group on radiotelegraph issues formed in 1903, which merged with the highly active Telegraph Union in 1932 to form the International Telecommunication Union. The 1903 conferences dealt with monopolization. The sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912 led to the first international agreement requiring ships to carry wireless technology able to communicate with any ship, regardless of the manufacturer of the wireless equipment (Fortner 1993, pp. 11–12).

The process of establishing this international communication system revolved around two conflicts, according to Robert Fortner. This process involved the struggle between governments and private businesses for control over the system, as well as the struggle between competing private interests. Governments tried to protect their domestic private firms because the governments depended on them. To illustrate the struggle between private interests, newspapers sided with governments against monopoly of the international telegraph cable system because rates charged to customers, like newspapers, were too high (Fortner 1993, pp. 78–79).

As the telecommunication system developed, it traced the economic and political points of the European empires, connecting European capitals to colonial capitals and trading centers. The telegraph lines followed the railroads, which were set up to extract commodities from colonies, not to communicate indigenously. As a result, geographic points on the system without geopolitical clout were bypassed in a way that presages complaints a century later from the third world. In the 1800s, however, the information flow bypassed Ireland and Canada as the transatlantic cable linked New York and London. The cable went through Canada first, but Canada had to send and receive all cables through New York (Fortner 1993, p. 88).

The imperial governments in Europe sought rapid communication with colonies to manage them internally, but the cables also tied empires together as channels of business, diplomacy, and the military. The private interests operating the system also struggled for monopoly control, working with governments to help achieve colonial stability, receiving government subsidies, and making demands of government (Fortner 1993, pp. 76–77). This early international system, forged from these battling private

and government interests to control international communication, laid the roots for the controversies debated in the 1990s.

THE EUROPEAN CARTEL'S "NEWS IMPERIALISM"

The rise of the three European news agencies, Havas, Wolff, and Reuters, and of the United States' AP between 1855 and 1850 led to agreements among the three European agencies from 1856 to 1914 that led to a European cartel. Disputes arising among the three were resolved by the agreements, which carved up areas of monopoly control. In 1859, the "Ring Combination" agreement gave Reuters the British colonial empire, North America, China, Japan, and most of Asia and the Pacific. Havas controlled the French empire, southern Europe, and parts of Africa. Wolff was granted Prussia, the rest of Europe, the Slavic countries, and Scandinavia, according to Howard Frederick (1993, pp. 38, 39).

The AP was let into the cartel in 1887 but was confined to North America. The United States experienced during the cartel's long existence a form of "cultural imperialism" that the third world would later object to in the 1970s and 1980s (Frederick 1993, p. 39). In the words of AP's former general manager, Kent Cooper, who fought to dismantle the cartel:

When Reuter, Havas and Wolff pooled their resources, established complete news agency control of international news and allotted to themselves the news agency exploitation in all countries of the world, they brought under their control the power to decide what the people of each nation would be allowed to know of the people of other nations and in what shade of meaning the news was to be presented. . . . International attitudes have developed from the im-pressions and prejudices aroused by what the news agencies reported. Monopoly made the system of deception work. The mighty foreign propaganda carried on through these channels in the last hundred years has been one of the causes of wars that has never been uncovered. (Cooper 1942, p. 8)

According to Cooper, because the AP agreed to bar itself from sending news about the United States beyond its borders, agreeing that only Reuters could send U.S. news abroad, stereotypes and inaccuracies resulted:

So Reuters decided what news was to be sent from America. It told the world about Indians on the war path in the West, lynchings in the South, and bizarre crimes in the North. The charge for decades was that nothing credible to America was ever sent. American businessmen criticized the Associated Press for permitting Reuters to belittle America abroad. (1942, p. 12)

Cooper complained that Reuters and Havas kept out AP competition, presented "disparaging" U.S. news or none at all to Americans and "glorified" news of their own countries (1942, p. 43). He charged that "the big three collectively and individually exer-

cised a dictatorship over their weaker colleagues in the smaller countries" (p. 36). These ideas are echoed in the 1970s call for a new information order, although the AP is on the other side of the latter contest.

The critics of the Western press in the 1920s and 1930s, Stuart Bullion (1982) notes in tracing back the information order debates, proposed media, and audience responsibilities to correct the imbalances. Calls ranged from self-censorship to better journalistic and reader training.

For its part, the AP left the cartel in 1919, signing 25 newspapers in Central America. It began service to Japan in 1930 and signed a contract with Reuters to exchange news in 1934 (Fortner 1993, p. 116). The AP was partially inspired by two newer U.S. news agencies, United Press Association and International News Service, which were not part of the cartel and ignored the cartel's regions of influence. But it was World War II that destroyed the European cartel. The Nazis turned Wolff into a propaganda agency in the 1930s, causing Reuters and Havas to end their contracts. The Nazis closed Havas after Germany occupied France, and Reuters received a British government subsidy during the war to offer a second news service.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Between the two major European wars, the League of Nations in 1925 addressed the role of the press in preserving world peace, and in 1936 set forth obligations of radio. Calling the press an effective means of leading the public toward "moral disarmament," the League in 1925 asked for a panel of experts to outline the role of the press in maintaining world peace and reducing international risks, using rapid and cheap transmission of news (Fortner 1993, pp. 116-17). In 1927, the League adopted resolutions concerning the working conditions of journalists and press freedoms (Galtung and Vincent 1992, p. 112). The League's final report stressed the need to protect the sending of news from reporters to parent companies and the need to eliminate censorship in peacetime and propaganda (Bullion 1982, p. 162). In 1936, the League asked for states to regulate broadcasts harmful to international understanding, including those that incite social unrest. The convention also sought prohibition of broadcasting falsehoods that harm international understanding and messages that incite war (Mehra 1986, p. 104). Nongovernmental bodies also discussed international media issues in the 1920s and 1930s, including the Press Congress of the World, which heard a Latin American concerned about imperialism of the U.S. and British press, as well as concerns about news coverage of emerging societies. The group in 1926 called for worldwide codes of journalism ethics and standards of conduct (Bullion 1982, p. 163).

The League-sponsored meetings all reflected broad participation of countries in addition to the Western powers (Bullion 1982, p. 163), although the concerns of the 1920s centered on European powers and excluded the two-thirds of the world colonized by Europe. Only after the colonial empires were shaken by World War II and the wave of national liberation movements in the 1950s through the 1970s emerged could the third world voice its concerns about international communication issues. Before that time, however, the League of Nations collapsed in the late 1930s, and its work in

international communications was lost in the wake of World War II, when the UN was formed.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND UNESCO UP TO 1970

The League's successor, the UN, after witnessing the crucial role of the media during World War II as a force for great good or evil, created a series of resolutions concerning international communication leading to and stemming from its Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. The 50 countries then existing in the world soon divided between the camps of the United States and the Soviet Union over the desirability of a "free flow of information." The United States, supporting free flow of information and in a powerful global position after World War II, helped the AP establish its dominance in international news, as other U.S. media, including television and film, spread their products globally in the postwar decades.

According to critical media scholar Herbert Schiller, the U.S. media and government built a U.S.-dominated information order between 1945 and 1960. Under U.S. guidance, the UN and UNESCO collaborated in building that system, as U.S. capital became the dominant force in war-ravaged Europe and many former colonial areas. In addition to the AP and United Press dislodging European news agencies, the following changes occurred by 1960: Hollywood movies saturated the globe's movie screens; U.S. television programs became the dominant fare; and U.S. tourism, advertising, popular music, and print media, as well as the English language, filled international commercial culture (Schiller 1989, pp. 141-143). The UN and UNESCO interpreted these events as progress as the media modernized third-world nations, leading them to adopt the features of private economy and a consumer society. UNESCO itself endorsed the free flow of information doctrine at the urging of the United States. The doctrine, Schiller argues, permitted the global penetration of U.S. media industries that created the U.S.-dominated information order.

Cees Hamelink remarks that the tension in the process of communication between synchronization, consensus, and centralization, on the one hand, and diversity, independence, and decentralization, on the other, has shaped the UN and UNESCO from the beginning (1983, p. 56). Howard Frederick identifies the former as the "free-flow" advocates and the latter as the "balanced flow" advocates (1993, pp. 128-29). But the United States has advocated both sides of the tension. For example, the U.S. Commission for UNESCO recommended in 1947 that obstacles to the free flow of information should be removed but that UNESCO should also look at the quality of international communication and identify ways that the media can positively and creatively serve international understanding (Hamelink 1983, pp. 56-57). As Kaarle Nordenstreng notes, the United States stressed the importance of the media in serving understanding and promoting security (1986, p. 11).

Other early examples illustrate the tension Hamelink identified. The first session of the UN General Assembly requested a conference on the "rights, obligations and practices" to be included in the "freedom of information." UNESCO's constitution in 1945 accepted the principle of a free flow of ideas but stressed the need to use the

media for mutual understanding (Hamelink 1983, pp. 56-7). The United States had pushed for the inclusion of the "free-flow" language in UNESCO's constitution but failed in an attempt to get the idea of free flow in the UN Charter in 1945 (Frederick 1993, p. 128). The UN in 1945 supported free access to information; it accepted communication as a basic human right in its first general session in 1946; and it declared in Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights that

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (Nordenstreng, Manet, and Kleinwachter 1986, p. 123)

Article 28, by contrast, calls for an international order in which the rights of the individual can be fully realized (Hamelink 1983, p. 57).

The UN's early action on three communication issues includes the passing of Resolution 59, calling freedom of information a basic human right; Resolution 110, condemning all forms of propaganda designed to threaten peace or promote war; and Resolution 127, calling for increased diffusion of information to strengthen understanding and combat false or distorted news. These all occurred in a General Assembly dominated by the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union, in which there was much consensus in the late 1940s (Frederick 1993, p. 164).

Free expression is also included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966, while the same article adds that the right carries "special duties and responsibilities" and may be subject to restrictions (Hamelink 1983, p. 57). Free expression is also cited in the Western European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1950; the American Convention on Human Rights in 1969; the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 1981; and the well-known Helsinki Accords, adopted by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975 (Fortner 1993, p. 40).

UNESCO first became involved with information issues in the 1950s through early studies of one-way information flow between the North and the South. In 1951, the Economic and Social Council called for protections for journalists in gathering and sending news. The UN's news studies in the 1950s reviewed news in major dailies and the role of foreign correspondents. In the 1950s and 1960s, several conferences examined imbalances and inequities that were seen as obstacles to the free flow of information. Although concerns were raised as late as 1969, the conferences took no action to restrict the flow of information (Galtung and Vincent 1992, pp. 72-73).

The UN in 1957 began issuing almost annual calls for aid in developing media in the third world, with resolutions passed in 1958, 1959, 1961, and 1968, with repeated requests again in 1973 and 1976. Little, however, was done in response to these resolutions in a UN dominated by the West, advocating "free flow," and the Soviet sphere, advocating "balanced flow" (Mehra 1986, p. 38). The third world had not yet emerged in the 1950s and 1960s to formulate a unified response to the information order debate. Throughout the 1960s, developing countries had sought technical aid from the UN, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the ITU to build media

systems to address the imbalance in information flow. The U.S.-inspired free flow of information doctrine was questioned, and a new model that became known as "development journalism" was proposed. But the global media system continued to serve the developed world, linking Europe, North America, and other first-world countries. The rich northern countries dominated radio, recordings, film, television, and data flow, while the Big Four news agencies dominated international news flow. The developing countries emerging from colonial rule outnumbered the industrialized Western countries by 1970, but they were unable to gain access to the international communication system and were ill-equipped to develop their own systems. It was not until then that the call intensified for full equality in global communication (Fortner 1993, pp. 177-78).

THE HUTCHINS AND KERNER COMMISSIONS

Before the emergence of the third world, the content, control, and currents of international communication were addressed by groups that were not international, yet were significant critics of the media system that addressed international or intercultural issues. A group formed by U.S. media owner Henry Luce, the Commission on the Freedom of the Press, proposed a number of changes in international communication structures and content in the 1940s. Known as the Hutchins Commission, this group sought to persuade the media to be more responsible and fair in carrying out their obligations to society, including the preservation of world peace.

Another U.S. commission, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, appointed by President Lyndon Johnson to examine the causes of racial unrest in U.S. cities in the 1960s, also commented on the performance of the media. Although studying a domestic issue, the Kerner Commission found the media had not complied with the Hutchins Commission or the United Nations. Moreover, it found racial minority bias in U.S. media reporting, which reflects on international communication between dominant European-American racial groups and less powerful third-world countries comprising people of color.

Although mostly concerned with mass media within the United States, the Hutchins Commission also considered problems of international communication, calling for improved communication structures, fewer political and economic obstructions, and more accurate, representative, and higher quality reports and images in global information (Mehta 1986, p. 99). Critical of the commercial press interests in marketability for inhibiting balanced and comprehensive information, the Hutchins Commission members called for a government and media committee to fill in the void where commercial media interests fail. A public service function of private industry was suggested, with a government undertaking as a last resort (Mehta 1986, p. 100). The Hutchins authors also called for creation of a foreign reporters' organization with binding ethical codes and the authority to arbitrate complaints. They also suggested creation of an independent unit within UNESCO to monitor abuses.

In its seminal work, *A Free and Responsible Press*, the Hutchins Commission (1947) thought the mass media to be a powerful force to either promote civilization

or to "thwart," "debase," and "vulgarize" civilization and endanger world peace. With increasing scope and power, the mass media can spread lies with speed not imagined by the framers of the U.S. Constitution (p. 3). If it is "irresponsible," the press would contribute to "universal catastrophe"; or the press would fulfill its "duty" in a "new world struggling to be born," according to the commission (p. 4). Fearing the threats from both totalitarian governments and concentration of economic powers, the authors placed their faith in the free press and free expression as the key to a free society (pp. 5-6). They thought mass communication was most complete in the United States, with mass communication elsewhere suffering in countries as a result of poverty, censorship, and poor physical facilities (p. 67).

Among the five basic responsibilities of the media in a free society, two are particularly focused on international—and intercultural—communication. First, the Hutchins Commission called special attention to the need to report the "truth about the facts" in international news (p. 22), and second, it saw the need to project a representative picture of different cultures and nations without stereotyping (pp. 26-27).

Regarding the U.S. role in international mass communication, the Hutchins group (1947) suggested action by the government, the media, and the public. First, the U.S. government should use its own media as a substitute to inform the public of U.S. policies where private media are unwilling to supply U.S. information abroad (pp. 88-90). Second, arguing that the mass media should remain a private industry with a public interest, the commission urged the media to elevate rather than degrade public wants and to accept responsibilities of common carriers of information and discussion (pp. 92-93). Third, the public needed to recognize the crucial role of the media in world crisis (p. 96). With a "world on the brink of suicide" after World War II, adults must "learn how to live together in peace," the commission said (p. 99). The public was urged to develop nonprofit institutions to ensure that the public receives the supply, variety, quality, and quantity of media services that it requires (p. 97). The public also could establish an independent agency outside of government to report annually on media performance, including minority access and international cooperation regarding the picture of life presented by the U.S. media (pp. 100-102).

The international aspects of the Hutchins Commission's work are generally not considered in treatment of these persisting communication controversies, although scholars Kaarle Nordenstreng and Mercedes Lynn de Uriarte (1992) have in different contexts argued for its incorporation while addressing international and multicultural media issues in the 1990s. Uriarte also draws on the Kerner Commission's work as an important thread running from the UN and the Hutchins Commission. The Kerner Commission itself mentioned the Hutchins Commission and the UN, saying that the U.S. media had not complied with their recommendations or resolutions in reporting race relations in the United States. The Kerner Commission criticized the media for reporting race relations from the perspective of white, upper-middle-class men with news values that support elite individuals and institutions, Uriarte notes. By failing to portray blacks regularly and in the context of U.S. society, the news media contributed to racial disorder. Minorities are not covered except in times of crisis and are associated with problems of crime, drugs, and school dropouts.

NWIO IN UNESCO IN THE 1970s AND 1980s

Finding that political independence from European colonizers had not resulted in economic independence, a call from the highly diverse global minorities in the third world for a "new international economic order" was followed in the mid-1970s by a call for a "new international information order" to correct information imbalance, negative content, and monopoly control between the rich Northern countries and the poor Southern countries. Several key UNESCO documents from the new international information order movement, including the 1978 Mass Media Declaration and the 1980 MacBride Commission Report, led to a highly polarized and irrational debate in UNESCO in the early 1980s, with the U.S. media and other Western media categorically opposed to any changes in the global media system. The United States, citing information issues and claiming an anti-Western bias in UNESCO, withdrew from the organization January 1, 1985, followed by Britain and Singapore, effectively cutting off the debate.

The third-world countries first took issue with the international economic order in the early 1970s and then included cultural and communication issues. These objections to the state of the economic and information systems remained consistent as they were expressed primarily in UNESCO, but also in the United Nations, at the ITU, and at Non-Aligned Movement meetings. Evidence of the lopsided distribution of communications technology in the North, from mail services to telephones and books, in addition to the media, showed that the third-world countries had reason to be concerned with the imbalanced flow of media messages and the inability to stem the flow of television, film, news, and recordings from the West. In the face of this dominance, third-world countries responded by setting up alternative news agencies, mostly begun after the NWIO debate started in the early 1970s, but the impact of these regional or Southern news services remained negligible through the early 1990s.

The Western countries and media that defended the existing information order generally did not deny the existence of an imbalance in global information flow or a technological gap between the North and South. But, for the most part, the West focused on technical aid, through INTELSAT, the World Bank, and the ITU, to close the technological and information flow gap, while maintaining the essential role of the free flow of information (Fortner 1993, pp. 195-198). At the start of the NWIO movement, third-world countries found supporters in socialist countries that wanted to control the flow of information across borders, but for different reasons. The socialist world, at philosophical odds with the West over the notion of free flow of information, argued that its media were free from private control, which prevented the Western media from being objective. As the embodiment of the people, the state-owned press was freer than the capitalist-owned press of the West.

Fortner (1993, pp. 195-198) analyzes the debate by saying that the Western media, divided over the issue of communication control, argued that state control of information was anathema, while the socialist world and the third world argued that Western-dominated media did not provide free flow but provided information that was by and for Western media and audiences. At heart, the West saw information as a commodity, the socialist world and the third world saw information as a social good. As a commodity,

information flow prevents third-world countries from attaining political and economic independence. To balance the flow, suggestions ranged from alternative news systems, to reserving satellite slots for future use, and even to licensing journalists.

The first objections by the third world were made at UNESCO's general conference in 1970, when a two-way information flow was called for, as was the need for third-world countries to preserve their cultures and the need for third-world national communication policies. UNESCO responded by initiating research on news flow, on obstacles to a free flow, cultural autonomy, and on problems with isolationism. Following this meeting, a panel of UNESCO experts identified problems of "cultural neo-colonialism" caused by new communications technologies. The 1970 meeting has been recognized as the starting point for the UNESCO Mass Media Declaration, which was published in 1978 (Galtung and Vincent 1992, p. 74). In 1970, therefore, UNESCO shifted its approach to media problems from asking for technical aid to exploring social and political questions about the media (Mehra 1986, pp. 38-39).

The UN began responding to direct broadcast satellite transmissions, when the Soviet Union called for approval of principles in 1972. A resolution was adopted 102-1, with the United States alone in opposition, as it would be in many later General Assembly votes on communication issues, to endorse prior consent for DBS broadcasts (Galtung and Vincent 1992, p. 74). The Soviets backed another measure to establish principles governing the media, but the United States opposed this, as the other, because it would restrict the free flow of information (Galtung and Vincent 1992, p. 75).

Some media scholars have designated the birthplace of NWIO as the 1973 Algiers meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement. That group, which started in the mid-1950s, comprises third-world leaders representing more than 100 third-world countries—more than two-thirds of the world's people but little of its wealth (Galtung and Vincent 1992, p. 82). That 1973 meeting led to the establishment of a third-world news agency, the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool. At UNESCO-sanctioned meetings around the world, by 1976 the group had articulated the need to change the global communication system to decolonize information and create a new international information order.

A Soviet-sponsored resolution in UNESCO in 1974 asked states to make sure their media were not used for war and racial propaganda and asked for a "more balanced flow of communication." A Swedish consultant's report became the pattern for a 1974 UNESCO draft declaration for "balance" between "freedom of information" and "responsibility to prevent abuses." The draft, which formed the first effort to form what would become the Mass Media Declaration adopted in 1978, caused a debate in 1974 in which Western countries protested that it would muzzle the free press. In 1974, UNESCO did call for a "two-way flow" of information and for a "free and balanced flow." The draft declaration on the media was made the topic at a 1976 conference, at which UNESCO called for "liberating the developing countries from the state of dependence" (Mehra 1986, pp. 39-42).

In 1978, UNESCO unanimously adopted, with the support also of the United States, a modification of the draft, which became known as the Mass Media Declaration. This document set the agenda for the global communication debate. It affirmed freedom of expression and information, called for access and protection of journalists,

and asked the media to help give a voice to the third world. It asked the media to report about all cultures and peoples, exposing the problems that affect them, such as hunger, poverty, and disease. It asked the media to include the opinions of those who find the media prejudiced against them, and it sought correction of the imbalance in global news flow. The declaration also asked media professionals to include its ideas in their codes of ethics and asked countries to help develop media systems in the third world. UNESCO sought to promote "a free flow and a wider and better balanced exchange of information between the different regions of the world." In 1980, a resolution was adopted to implement the declaration, and a global congress was set for 1983.

Also in 1980 was the culmination of another effort set in motion by UNESCO in 1976, when a 16-member commission was set up to review the problems of communication in today's world. The MacBride Commission, headed by Irish politician Sean MacBride, was asked to look most closely at problems relating to the free and balanced flow of information and the needs of third-world countries. The task put the NWIO in the perspective of the new world economic order. Following an interim report that met with Western opposition to government intervention, involving the licensing of journalists, the MacBride Commission issued its toned-down report, called *Many Voices, One World* (MacBride et al. 1980), containing 82 recommendations, of which 72 were unanimous. The remaining ones were opposed, with the West against anti-commercial media suggestions, the Soviet bloc opposed to the abolition of government controls, and third-world countries seeking more balanced flow. UNESCO did not formally adopt or follow up the MacBride report, saying that some recommendations could be implemented, while others required more study. Instead, UNESCO in 1980 created the International Program for Development Communication (IPDC) to help develop media systems in the third world.

The result of compromise, nonetheless, the MacBride report called for "a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information," not a "free and balanced flow." It also called for a "new, more just and more effective world information and communication order" (Galtung and Vincent 1992, p. 87). With recommendations on media economics, administration, technological uses, training and research, the report also dealt with journalistic standards but rejected the idea of licensing. It called for U.S. journalists abroad to receive language and culture training and for gatekeepers in the West to be familiar with cultures in the third world.

Among its other recommendations, the MacBride report condemned censorship as well as the use of journalists for spying. It supported the need for national communication policies as a vital social resource. Emphasizing the media's role in helping oppressed peoples gain independence and the right to expression and information, the report called for reducing commercialism in the media. The report encouraged UNESCO to take a crucial role in carrying out the recommendations and suggested taxing profits on raw materials, the use of the radio spectrum, and the profits of international media corporations (Frederick 1993, p. 168-169).

One supporter arguing for the adoption of the NWIO has been Mustapha Masmoudi (1984), the former Tunisian secretary of information and ambassador to UNESCO. Masmoudi outlines the problem as centering on one-way, imbalanced information flows between the North and South managed by unequal information

resources dominated by the Big Four news agencies. In television, the first-world controls the spectrum and the programming, so that the third world becomes consumers of information. The lack of information about the third world other than coups and earthquakes perpetuates the colonial era bias and cultural imperialism. Masmoudi argues that the third world needs national communication policies, horizontal exchanges of information, and media personnel training. The third world also should alert the first world to the imbalance and work to democratize information structures by developing national news agencies and curtailing the Big Four monopoly. The first world, Masmoudi urges, should call public attention to the problem and, with an objective approach, help balance the information flow with more third-world news, cultural exchange, and respect for the laws of third-world nations.

WESTERN OPPOSITION TO NWIO

By the late 1970s, Western media and their owners had united to lobby against NWIO by associating it with government control of media. The World Press Freedom Committee was formed before the 1976 meeting on the Mass Media Declaration to disrupt its progress (Frederick 1993, p. 171). The Inter-American Press Association, a group of media owners in the Western Hemisphere, called its own meeting in 1976 to oppose a UNESCO-sponsored session on Latin American communication policies. The UNESCO meeting was postponed.

Opposition to the NWIO movement intensified after the MacBride report with the gathering of more than 50 representatives of private media from 20 countries in Talloires, France, in 1981 (Hachten 1987, pp. 139-140). The private gathering, arranged by the World Press Freedom Committee and the law school at Tufts University, formulated a declaration that called press freedom a "basic right" and urged UNESCO to drop attempts to restrict the press in violation of the Declaration of Human Rights and other international covenants. The group opposed plans to license journalists, and it opposed an international code of ethics. The group also reiterated the MacBride report's call for the end of censorship and the journalists' right of access to all news sources.

The response to the Talloires Declaration was nearly unanimous in the United States, with the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and the major U.S. media solidly opposed to the NWIO. The conservative Heritage Foundation claimed the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO in 1985 was its doing, but the government's change was stark with the Reagan administration's shift away from the flexible, accommodating policies of President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s that led to the creation of the IPDC in the United Nations. The ultraconservative Reagan policy attacked the UN system itself, making UNESCO what one official called "the Grenada of the UN" (Frederick 1993, pp. 171-73).

In general, Western opposition to NWIO centered on seeing the problem as the need for improving third-world media systems and providing a greater variety of news outlets, while UNESCO focused in the early 1980s on media projects and technical training for journalists through the IPDC. Despite this change in UNESCO, the United States announced in late 1983 that it would withdraw from UNESCO in 1985 because the

Reagan administration felt UNESCO was politicized, with an anti-U.S. bias. The U.S. withdrawal silenced the debate about the NWIO (Hachten 1987, p. 143).

According to NWIO supporters, the increasing attack after 1980 was led by a U.S.-dominated coalition including the private media group, the World Press Freedom Committee, and the U.S. State Department, which together accused UNESCO of using NWIO to promote "government-controlled media" and backing attempts to thwart press freedom (Traber and Nordenstreng 1992, pp. 5-6). Despite UNESCO's reminders that the MacBride report endorsed press freedom, the criticism continued. UNESCO, in several ways, still supported NWIO, including meetings in 1983 that pursued the problem of building communication systems in the third world, and it adopted an international code of ethics for journalists. The United States responded with its withdrawal from UNESCO, although some scholars debate whether NWIO was part of the larger issue of multilateralism to which the United States was opposed. But NWIO supporters and critics alike agree that the U.S. action silenced the debate in UNESCO. In 1986, the Round Table on the NWIO discussed the need to correct imbalances while maintaining media freedom.

THE NWIO DEBATE SINCE 1985

Although these issues of content, control, and current continued to be addressed in the UN and UNESCO after 1985, UNESCO altered its focus away from more controversial elements of the debate by reaffirming Western values of free flow. Efforts have continued quietly within both the UN and UNESCO, as well as in other intergovernmental bodies, such as the ITU, and in nongovernmental organizations, such as the World Association for Christian Communication, and other professional groups, such as the MacBride Round Table, which has met annually since 1989 to assess issues and suggest action revolving around the MacBride report, *Many Voices, One World* (MacBride et al. 1980).

Since the 1980s, however, the more forceful debate has shifted back to the context of the industrialized Western nations with advanced communication systems. With concerns about new telecommunications technologies, limits on foreign entertainment programming and concerns about cultural imperialism are stirring in Western Europe and Canada in reaction against U.S. media dominance that sound similar to issues raised by third world countries. Within GATT trade talks, the cultural industry issues were a primary concern, with, for example, the French film industry successfully gaining from the United States a concession to limit importation of U.S. films into France. With the breakup of the Soviet bloc and then the Soviet Union itself between 1989 and 1991, followed by breakout of war in the former Yugoslavia, a significant realm of global media is in flux that must lead to negotiation of the shape of the new media. Within the United States itself, concern about the effects of violent media programming have led to a discussion in Congress to control television content and to calls for self-regulation of the television networks and companies. Finally, the emergence of a government plan in 1994 for a U.S. information superhighway has brought with it the same questions and concerns raised by the introduction of the telegraph

more than 150 years ago, with the prospect of a global information highway on the horizon.

After 1985, UNESCO redirected its energies to avoid the politically sensitive issue of communication by taking a more moderate stance. UNESCO has reaffirmed its commitment to the freedom of the press and is focusing on activities to build media systems in the third world through infrastructures, training, and education. The goal of these technical programs is a balanced flow of information that attains a free flow of information (Galtung and Vincent 1992, pp. 99-100). In early 1994, the possibility that the United States would rejoin UNESCO in 1995 increased, but supporters of the NWIO did not feel the issue would be revived.

Although fading in UNESCO, the debate resurfaced in the mid-1980s in the ITU, which in 1985 issued the Maitland Report, or the *Missing Link*, which framed the ITU's task as political and declared that the gap between the developed and third world should be closed. Radically departing from its previous role as a technical, engineering group, the ITU became a more activist organization calling for a New World Telecommunications Order (Frederick 1993, pp. 176-77). The Non-Aligned Movement continued to support the outlines of NWIO in 1989 and into the 1990s, but the influence of the Non-Aligned Movement also is thought to be reduced since the end of the cold war. Still other examples of NWIO remaining on the agenda of southern countries includes the 1990 World Conference on Islamic Thought in Iran and the UN's annual Non-Governmental Organization's Conference in New York in 1991 (Traber and Nordenstreng 1992, pp. 16-17). Also, the South Commission of former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in 1990 called on the South to reduce information dependency on the North and to build media ties between countries in the South (Frederick 1993, p. 177).

The debate also has shifted to other organizations, mostly nongovernmental and professional ones, such as a 1989 meeting of the Union for Democratic Communications and the National Lawyers Guild on the media and international law (Galtung and Vincent 1992, pp. 101-102). Also in 1989, the World Association for Christian Communication adopted a declaration focusing on communication as an individual right. The first MacBride Round Table was held that year, sponsored by the International Organization of Journalists, the Media Foundation of the Non-Aligned, and the Federation of Southern African Journalists. It was the first of six annual meetings of the MacBride Round Table, including the most recent in early 1994. In 1989, the Round Table found that NWIO topics were more relevant, including concern over expanding technologies, and the statement called for a free and responsible press, echoing the Hutchins Commission. At its meeting in 1991 in Turkey following the Persian Gulf War, the MacBride Round Table called for new coalitions of media professionals, activists, consumer groups, women, minorities, and labor and environmental groups to regain participation in cultural policy for peace and security.

Other groups meeting with NWIO as a central topic include an Institute for Latin America and World Association for Christian Communication seminar in 1990, an Intercontinental Journalists Conference in 1990, a Gannett Foundation Media Center conference in 1991, and an International Press Service Council on Information and Communications meeting in 1991. In the scholarly research community, The International

Association for Mass Communication Research has provided strong support for NWIO since the mid-1970s. Another research group, The International Communication Association, held panels on NWIO at its 1991 meeting.

Aside from the shift to professional organizations, the issues of content, control, and current have primarily shifted to disputes among Western countries themselves. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as the Helsinki process, has drawn together more than 40 European countries, the United States, and Canada to discuss communication and the changing nature of Europe, including the breakup of the Soviet Union, democratization, and the redrawing of borders in Eastern Europe. Two themes of this conference in 1989 were human rights and information issues as important to international cooperation (Frederick 1993, p. 176).

"Cultural imperialism" increasingly in the 1980s and 1990s has not been a phenomenon reserved for third-world countries, but felt by Canada, France, and the European Community, which have expressed concern about the effect of foreign media. Some of their governments have adopted policies to reduce foreign media and advertising. In Canada, 98 percent of all drama on English-language television is imported, and 90 percent of all drama on French-language television is imported. Only 28 percent of all Canadian television programming is Canadian (Frederick 1993, pp. 135-36). Canada has responded with program quotas and subsidies for Canadian content in prime-time television, but the regulations have affected only the margins of viewing patterns, Canada also has program and employment guidelines to better reflect Canada's cultural diversity. In 1991, Canada also required the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to foster an image consistent with Canada's multiculturalism. Private broadcast media have followed with codes to avoid minority stereotyping and increase hiring of minorities (Ferguson 1993). The U.S.-Canada free trade agreement exempts cultural industries, giving evidence of the resentment of U.S. media influence.

In Western Europe in 1989, the European Community urged an increase in European television production through government support and a limit on imported U.S. television programs, among foreign imports, to less than 50 percent (Stevenson 1994, pp. 113, 146, 169). France, along with Italy, in the early 1990s was calling for quotas on foreign broadcasting imports to reduce "cultural contamination." These calls led to a standoff over the latest GATT talks, at which, as mentioned, the French won concessions from the United States to put trade restrictions on U.S.-produced movies and television programs in the European Community. These restrictions are similar to those that Canada negotiated with the United States in their 1989 trade agreement.

Closely related to the concept of communication sovereignty in the developed world is transborder data flow, which involves the collection and dissemination of electronic data across national borders. These data include insurance, banking, and credit information. Western European nations and Canada have complained that transborder data flows disregard national security and privacy. Some European countries have sought to restrict this flow, with Sweden in 1973 making it illegal to set up data records without government approval. Japan, Canada, and France have set up policies to protect their local computer and information processing businesses, while many privacy or data protection laws have been enacted. Sweden and others also have expressed

concern about U.S. data banks containing information about their citizens (Frederick 1993, p. 122).

With Western European countries and Canada more open to regulating the content, control, and current of international communication, even as they undergo the process of commercialization and privatization of their broadcast media, the U.S. media and government are more isolated as proponents of the free flow of information doctrine. But technological developments within the United States appear to be generating forces that could engage the government and media in the kinds of discussions that they have resisted since World War II in opposing government-controlled media. The National Information Infrastructure, which has been dubbed the "information superhighway," has become an initiative of the Clinton administration, involving the public in the creation of the new, multimedia, computerized, data base-centered, media environment of the future. The White House in late 1993 released its "agenda for action" to begin shaping the information superhighway, with its promise of telecommuting and tele-educating within the United States. Vice President Al Gore proposed the national information network in early 1994, bringing up questions of government regulation, competition among communications companies, right to privacy, and public access to information.

The Clinton administration agenda for the information highway is seeking to define the government's role in complementing the private communication industry to ensure that the information infrastructure has universal public access and is affordable. The Clinton administration's goal is to develop the U.S. information highway policy with business, labor, academia, the public, Congress, and state and local government to provide universal service, technological innovations and applications; seamless operation of the network of networks; information security and reliability; and of import in international communication, coordination with other nations to avoid obstacles and to prevent unfair policies that would hinder U.S. private industry and public access to government information.

Information superhighways are also being developed in Australia and elsewhere. In Australia, for example, a media journal in early 1994 began seeking critical analyses of these proposals, which will provide new entertainment, communications, education, and information services, and their social, economic, and political impact. Areas of special concern in cross-national analyses of the superhighways include political and economic motivations, emerging information industries and new power roles, notions of universal service, the roles of regulators and consumer interest groups, privacy and surveillance, public policy for principles of common carriers, and public access.

As these new media are developed, issues of international communication content, control, and current will most certainly be sources of conflict and negotiations. Fortner (1993) suggests that societies set up and sustain monopolies of knowledge to provide a centralized means of social control. Historically, Western states have controlled other countries' policies and their media systems, with the Soviet Union also gaining, then losing, influence and more recently Japan and Germany increasing their influence. However, the inability to achieve equity and access within the international communication system remains an issue, as it has for the 150 years since electronic communication created a meaningful international system.

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