

# International Communication and Globalization



edited by Ali Mohammadi

# **International Communication and Globalization**



International Communication  
and Globalization  
*A Critical Introduction*

edited by  
*Ali Mohammadi*



SAGE Publications  
London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

Editorial arrangement and Chapter 4 © Ali Mohammadi 1997  
Chapter 1 © Oliver Boyd-Barrett 1997  
Chapter 2 © James Halloran 1997  
Chapter 3 © Ralph Negrine 1997  
Chapter 5 © Cees J. Hamelink 1997  
Chapter 6 © Majid Tehranian & Katharine Kia Tehranian 1997  
Chapter 7 © John Tomlinson 1997  
Chapter 8 © Richard Maxwell 1997

First published 1997

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the Publishers.



SAGE Publications Ltd  
6 Bonhill Street  
London EC2A 4PU

SAGE Publications Inc.  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd  
32, M-Block Market  
Greater Kailash – I  
New Delhi 110 048

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication data**

A catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library.

ISBN 0 7619 5553 4  
ISBN 0 7619 5554 2 (pbk)

**Library of Congress catalog card number 97-067416**

Typeset by Mayhew Typesetting, Rhayader, Powys  
Printed in Great Britain by Redwood Books, Trowbridge, Wiltshire

# Contents

<i>Notes on the contributors</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
Introduction: A Critical Reader in International Communication and Globalization in a postmodern world	1
<b>Part I Research in International Communication and Globalization: Contradictions and Directions</b>	7
1 International Communication and Globalization: Contradictions and Directions <i>Oliver Boyd-Barrett</i>	11
2 International Communication Research: Opportunities and Obstacles <i>James Halloran</i>	27
<b>Part II An Overview of Communication Technology, Deregulation Policy and their Impact on the Developing Countries</b>	48
3 Communications Technologies: An Overview <i>Ralph Negrine</i>	50
4 Communication and the Globalization Process in the Developing World <i>Ali Mohammadi</i>	67
<b>Part III The New Paradigm and Global Morality</b>	90
5 International Communication: Global Market and Morality <i>Cees J. Hamelink</i>	92
6 Taming Modernity: Towards a New Paradigm <i>Majid Tehranian and Katharine Kia Tehranian</i>	119
<b>Part IV Globalization, Culture and the Control of Difference</b>	168
7 Cultural Globalization and Cultural Imperialism <i>John Tomlinson</i>	170

8	International Communication: The Control of Difference and the Global Market <i>Richard Maxwell</i>	191
	<i>Bibliography</i>	210
	<i>Index</i>	222

## Notes on the contributors

**Oliver Boyd-Barrett** is Director, Distance Learning, at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester. He has written extensively on the international news agencies, news flow, and media education. Recent books include *The Globalization of News* (with Terhi Rantanen, eds, Sage, forthcoming); and *Approaches to Media* (with Chris Newbold, eds, 1995).

**James Halloran** is currently Research and Emeritus Professor at the University of Leicester. He was Director of the Centre for Mass Communication Research from when he founded it in 1996 to 1991, and was President of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (of which he is now Honorary Life President) from 1972 to 1990. He has acted as consultant to UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and to many media and educational institutions, and he is the author of numerous books and articles on the media and the various aspects of the communication process.

**Cees Hamelink** is Professor of International Communication at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He was President of the International Association for Mass Communication Research from 1990–94. His publications include *Global Communications and Cultural Autonomy* (1983), *Finance and Information* (1983), *Transnational Data in the Information Age* (1984), *The Technology Gamble* (1988), and *Trends in World Communication* (1994).

**Richard Maxwell** is the author of *The Spectacle of Democracy: Spanish Television, Nationalism, and Political Transition* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995) and numerous articles and chapters on international communication and political economy of media and culture.

**Ali Mohammadi** is Reader in International Communication and Cultural Studies at Nottingham Trent University. He has co-authored, with A. Sreberny Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication and Culture, and the Iranian Revolution* (1994) and co-edited *Questioning the Media* (1995).

**Ralph Negrine** is Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester. He has edited books on the 'new' media and written on many aspects of communications policy. His most recent book is *The Communication of Politics* (1996) also published by Sage.



**Majid Tehranian** is Professor of International Communication at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and Director of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. His most recent books include *Technologies of Power: Information Machines and Democratic Prospects* (1990) and *Restructuring for World Peace: On the Threshold of the 21st Century* (1992).

**Katharine Kia Tehranian** is Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Her latest publications are *Restructuring for World Peace: On the Threshold of the 21st Century* (1992) and *Modernity, Space, and Power: The American City in Discourse and Practice* (1995).

**John Tomlinson** is Principal Lecturer and Head of the Centre for Research in International Communication and Culture at Nottingham Trent University. He has contributed to several journals on social theory, cultural imperialism, and globalization. His most recent book is *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction* (1991).

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Robert Bennett at Coventry University for his sincere editorial comments and support, and Professor Richard Johnson at the Centre for Research in International Communication and Culture for reading each individual chapter and providing valuable insights. Thanks also to Frances Banks, the secretary of the English and Media Studies Department for her kind and usual help. I would also like to thank Dr John Tomlinson, the head of CRICC, for his encouragement and useful discussion.

I would like to dedicate this volume to the memory of Dr Ali Assadi-Nik, the first generation of Western-educated Communication Researcher in Iran.



# Introduction

*International Communication and Globalization* offers the opportunity to read critically in the field of communication studies: to read with awareness and to consider key international issues. It is the first reader of its kind. It offers basic chapters and summaries of research, new approaches to studying international communication, and an understanding of how this communication operates in relation to the process of globalization in a postmodern world. At the end of each chapter you will find a list of questions to help you in your studying and revision.

In this introduction we look at some of the key terms of our title and outline the order of topics in the book.

## **International communication**

International communication is a complex and fast-growing sub-field within the major field of communication and media studies. It encompasses the issues of culture and cultural commodification (the turning of cultural products into commodities), the diffusion of information and news broadcasting by media empires around the world, and the challenges faced by the developing world in the light of these processes. Within the context of such a New World Information Order, it considers questions of power and the process of technology, censorship and human rights. Within the context of a concern with technology, it studies television satellite broadcasting and the roles of the nation state, freedom of information and of technology itself. It explores the new means of transnational communication. It offers an overview of international organizations such as UNESCO, other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

After the Second World War it became quite obvious that certain types of information were very powerful for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the international system. In order to have a balance in culture and information affairs among the nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established. UNESCO's purpose was not only to encourage all member states to co-operate in the field of education, science, culture and communication, but

also to provide a platform for member states to discuss peacefully how to maintain a reasonable view on cultural and intellectual rights, flows of news and information, and freedom of expression.

The first article of UNESCO is supposed to foster collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture, justice, human rights and, most importantly, freedoms for the whole people of the world. Today's evidence shows that Hollywood films, the bulk of magazines, a great variety of videos, most television programmes as well as news and information about the world we are living in, are produced in the West. It is here that the economic power and the control of technology lies. UNESCO and other UN agencies became a conduit for those nations which have the technologies and the power to use international communication for legitimizing their position and their policies. This imposition is not only a matter of news values and agenda setting, imbalances of this kind also create two worlds – 'the haves and the have nots' – in communications and in other terms. A 1994 Human Development Report shows the incredible income gaps between rich and poor sections of the populations in the developing world are close to bringing chaos and uncertainty for the future. As Schiller (1996) notes, the gap between rich and poor nations is widening. Even in a rich nation like the United States the growth of the economy lies with 40% of the population who hold 68% of the nation's income, while 60% of the population remains in the margin – similar to the people of the Third World. Schiller also raises a very important question about the rapidly rising poverty across the globe:

Will the creation of privately financed and owned high-speed, multi-capability circuits carrying broad streams of messages and images, lessen the gaps in living conditions that presently exist across the globe? Time-Warner, AT&T, Microsoft, and their rivals cannot be preoccupied with social inequality. Their focus is on revenue. (Schiller, 1996: 97)

Decolonization in itself has not made the world more just and peaceful. The evidence shows more news and images come from the Western world and the access to non-Western culture in terms of information, knowledge, entertainment and images becomes more scarce. UNESCO and many other NGOs may have been able to establish the recognition of a multicultural world but they have not been very successful in maintaining it.

In its relation to other approaches – for example, sociology and cultural studies – the study of international communication explores the ways in which terms like globalization and postmodernism are themselves conceptualized and the ways in which questions of culture and power intersect with issues around social identity and the production of wishes and desires. For further discussion of the issues of culture and identity see Chapters 7 and 8 of this volume.

Pocket-sized video cameras, video-cassette recorders, laptop satellite signal receivers and transmitters, fiber optics, microwave relays and laptop personal computers and fax machines, mobile telephones and the Internet

have expanded international communications almost beyond the human imagination. Radio and, more importantly, television bring listeners and viewers live coverage of the landing on the moon, the winter and summer Olympics, the pomp and ritual accompanying the meetings of heads of states, World Cup football and rugby. All of these play a role in the way people in the postmodern world are living.

## Globalization

Some communication scholars believe it is important to examine the global development of international communications (Frederick, 1993; Hamelink, 1994a; Stevenson, 1993; Schiller, 1996). By 'globalization', scholars refer to the way in which, under contemporary conditions especially, relations of power and communication are stretched across the globe, involving compressions of time and space and a recomposition of social relationships. Schiller (1989, 1996) and Hills (1986) have drawn our attention to rapid market changes as one consequence of deregulation and, furthermore, the emergence of not only new mega corporations, but also a new class of merchants of cultural commodities, entertainments and information technology. This class Bagdikian usefully names 'Lords of the Global Village' (Bagdikian, 1989). All of the chapters in this volume use the notion of globalization to understand contemporary developments in international communication – more or less critically. For a fuller discussion of the debates surrounding this term, see chapters 4, 6 and 7.

Other scholars believe that by globalizing the world through the electronic highway it is impossible 'to govern' the world (Schiller, 1996). The rapid development of satellite communications is crucial here if the rest of even the Western world is to keep up with the United States. By removing distance, satellite communication is a major factor in the globalization of the market. Similarly, computerization is a precondition of the information economy. Schiller suggests that one of the reasons why the United States wanted to capture the control of international communication circuits from British cable interests was to build satellites 'to bypass the British Empire's monopoly in international communication' (Schiller, 1996: 93).

Today, one of the most significant functions of globalization is the so-called 'free flow of information'. If we consider CNN a global corporation, its major function is news and information, but this news service is constructed from a mainly US perspective. In a similar way, US cultural industries and media entertainment based on the doctrine of the free flow of information have had influence all over the whole world.

The present plan of constructing an information highway in the West means better access for US global firms to global markets. They are already in a dominating position. The information highway will be at the service of those countries that can afford to pay for the information. Building and owning the electronic information highway will be especially beneficial to

those firms that are mainly US-based. As history since the Second World War has shown, US companies always lead the global market. Schiller indicates that 37,000 companies 'currently occupy the command posts of the world commercial order, the largest 100 transnational companies, in 1990, had about \$3.2 trillion in global assets, of which \$1.2 trillion were outside of their own home countries' (Schiller, 1996: 94).

We should also note that Time-Warner, Bell Atlantic, AT&T, IBM and COMCAST are the largest players in cultural commodities, communication and information technology in the world today. In the face of the gigantic power of transnational corporations, it is not clear what will happen to the role of nation states. Many critics predict 'the end of the nation state'. Jean-Marie Guehenno (1995), for example, asks a very important question: without the nation, can democracy survive? It is hard to imagine a world which, in the twenty-first century, may be dominated by a few transnational companies. Will nations and states become manipulated and powerless?

The rapid growth of domestic markets is occurring in developing countries as well as in Western societies. The important dimension of the global market is a lack of equal competition. The US-based mega corporations will eventually fill the cultural space of the world market, in a situation in which there is a shortage of actual programmes for international television.

International communication also affects the cultural balances and boundaries of the world. Kenworthy (1996) divides the world into eight large cultural blocs: the Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic-Scandinavian, Slavic, Muslim, African, Indian and Sinitic cultures. The Anglo-Saxon culture covers Britain, North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Since the Second World War the cultural influence of these regions has been growing very fast. Most of the mega cultural firms are based on the commodification of Anglophone culture. Most cultural traffic flows out of the Anglophone regions. Whether one agrees with Kenworthy's categories or not, it is critical to look at the globalization process in relation to cultural production and the shifting zones of cultural influence.

### **International communication: traditions of research**

In order to understand the impact of international communication in a self-aware and critical way, we need to appreciate the different trends of research that have emerged since the 1960s. From the outset different schools of thought have been in contention over their understanding of international communication. The first part of this book contributes to an answer by introducing the key research tendencies, which we call 'orthodox' and 'critical' communication research. The nature of the research in the field of international communication and globalization is explained in the introduction to Part I.

Part II of this book examines the rapid development of international communication as a consequence of changes in communication technology

(such as the fax machine, satellite broadcasting television, etc.). The contributors of this section are also especially concerned with the impact of market relations, financial institutions and new technologies on the countries of the Third World, and on the inequalities between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. Also in the frame is the emergence of corporate media systems as an aspect of globalization.

Part III discusses the relation between the processes of privatization, deregulation and the imposition of market relations characteristic of this phase of globalization and the questions of morality, ethics and alternative paradigms. Are there alternatives to the 'morality' of the market and 'the free flow of information'? What are the likely prospects of this current phase of modernization, given the previous developments of the system?

The contributions in Part IV look more closely at some cultural aspects of the processes of contemporary globalization. It is also in these cultural debates that the postmodern concept emerges. Part IV, therefore, engages in a fuller debate about postmodernism and also discusses those disciplines – sociology and cultural studies especially – where the debate about cultural globalization has figured most strongly.

### **The postmodern world**

We are moving towards the twenty-first century with uncertainty. Globalization, as a kind of myth of our times, is hard to grasp. How can we comprehend change when the progress in communication technology is so rapid? If weapons of mass destruction are more under control, tolerance of ethnic difference and self-expression seem to have been reduced to levels of incomprehending barbarism. The Chechniya, Afghan and Balkan wars are cases in point. In the race for globalization, unqualified competitiveness has been projected as the key to success. Tense mergers and hostile take-overs are the economic games we live by.

There is a well-established debate today about whether the late twentieth century (or some earlier period) has seen the emergence of conditions which are beyond modernity, or, in the best-known version of the argument, are 'postmodern'. Some argue that the postmodern world will see the end of inequality and ignorance (Drucker, 1957). Others, like Daniel Bell (1973), see the postmodern world as a manifestation of new action and social relations. Bell's visionary perceptions are very similar to Toynbee's (1963) thesis of the development of the sameness everywhere in the world.

One feature of postmodernity, as the name implies, is a radical break from previous periods. This includes disbelief in the old narratives of human progress (now seen as flawed), not least because they excluded the experience of most (non-European) peoples in the world. Theories of 'modernization' which flourished in the decades after the Second World War were one late example of this kind of Western-centred or Northern-centred framework. As such confidence erodes, the problems and confusions of the contemporary



world are uppermost, confusions especially around competing identities, cultural fragmentation and the different modes of experience in terms of time and space (e.g., Best and Kellner, 1991). In these circumstances, centring on media questions in his final speech at the Edinburgh Television Festival in 1993, the playwright Dennis Potter urged us to be aware that 'our television has been ripped apart and falteringly re-assembled by politicians who believed that value is a monetary term only, and that a cost-accountant is thereby the most suitable adjudicator of what we can and cannot see on our screens'. He also warned against the threat to democracy from the mega corporations, urging us to watch carefully the implementation of the laws against what he called 'cross-ownership'.

Potter's warning, and his emphasis on ethical and political issues, was timely on several counts. The take-over of public space by advertising merchants and the powerful flow of US television programmes, films, music, news, entertainment culture, theme parks and shopping malls now set the cultural standard from Brazil to Dubai. We suffer, at the same time, the culture of commercial primacy and chronic economic uncertainty, especially in the poorer parts of the world. We are living in a world where, it seems, no power can challenge capitalism. Yet what modernity and modernization in this sense have signally failed to do is to close the gap between rich and poor in an unjust world. It is arguable that this is the main political and ethical challenge in the world today. Will postmodern theorists find a way to challenge the new forms of knowledge, information and economy whose only concern appears to be profit? Will virtual reality for a small group of nations in the North be at the expense of an increasing actual poverty for people in the South?

# Part I

## RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND GLOBALIZATION: CONTRADICTIONS AND DIRECTIONS

---

As we noted in the introduction, Part I is concerned with contradictions and directions of research in international communication and globalization. What are the major perspectives in international communication and globalization research?

It is worth noting first, however, that the study of *international* communication is a relatively recent phenomenon. Until recently, especially in Europe, communication research has been restricted by national geographical boundaries and based on local needs and community interests. Communication research has been fragmented and often neglected. But as McQuail (1994) suggests, the geopolitics of Europe, with rapid movements towards unification, the integration of European economies, the internationalization of communication – all examples of transnationalization – have stimulated a rapid growth of communication studies in Europe. As the study of international communication has been stronger in the United States, though, the view of the world in US communication studies has often been decidedly ‘American’. It is arguable that a truly global study of communication, which takes account of the experiences of more peripheral societies and economies, is really very recent indeed.

Today it is useful to distinguish between two main traditions. The first is strongest in Europe, though there are well-known practitioners in the United States too. This ‘critical’ tradition has been marked by qualitative and theoretical research and has been closely associated with a broader study of ‘culture’ in the sense of forms of consciousness and ways of life. The dominant tradition of communication research in the United States, by comparison, has been mainly quantitative, with aspirations to ‘science’ and often closely related to the policies of mainstream institutions and government establishments. Because the debate between these traditions is still sometimes fierce, it seems important to start this volume by exploring the directions and contradictions.

In the United States the history of research in international communication goes back to the First World War and was concerned with psychological warfare and propaganda as a project of the War Department. The field of communication study concerning international communication was not established in the universities until the 1950s. In 1926, however, Harold

Lasswell undertook a systematic and pioneering study of the psychological warfare and propaganda techniques of the First World War and then, with Walter Lippmann, the chief leaflet writer and the editor of the US propaganda unit, for the first time investigated the impact of communication technology on the Western world. Lippmann, as an experienced propagandist of the First World War, with his two very important books, *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom of Public* (1925), promoted communication as part of the study of social science in US universities (Simpson, 1994).

During the 1930s Lippmann and Lasswell both articulated communication studies as an instrumental process for imposing one doctrine on others. Lasswell established a formula for research in communication: 'Who says what to whom with what effect', and both Lasswell and Lippmann suggested that the articulation of communication technology as a form of domination became the foundation of research in communication studies in the United States. The positivist method of research into communication and social science as a whole was also being applied for the first time in leading academic institutions such as Columbia and Chicago universities (Simpson, 1994). In the 1950s the Lasswell formula and its derivatives became the slogan of commercialization and advertisement in the United States. Now, the tradition for research in communication is mainly promoting consumerism, and criticizing and abhorring communism with the application of the quantitative and qualitative methods.

The first two chapters of this volume illustrate the traditions of international communication in Western Europe and the United States. By examining the experiences of two cultures and traditions we see that they have different histories and outlooks in the field of communication studies.

In the United States the study of communications started seriously after the Second World War but in Europe communication research was not regarded as an important field of study until more recently. However, it is important to remember that psychological warfare and propaganda techniques began in Germany before the Second World War with Goebbels's intellectual journal *Das Reich* published through the University of Berlin although these were not areas studied among academics (Simpson, 1994).

In the following chapters, the points of view of well-established scholars, who argue forcibly for the virtues of each direction, will be discussed. It is worth adding that neither the Boyd-Barrett nor Halloran chapters represent state-of-the-art research in international communication studies. Rather, they were asked to contribute to this volume because their work has been central to the development and the defence of the different research traditions and because they have both engaged in strong arguments over the general directions of work in the field. Neither can be taken as entirely representative figures: Halloran, for example, is more interested in questions of policy than much European research has been, and is more hostile to cultural studies than most current researchers in the media; Boyd-Barrett, though very critical of the directions of research, clearly believes he can learn something from it. We invite you to read their contributions,

however, as a kind of dialogue, framed by our own editorial comments. The dialogue tells us a lot, we think, about the political and other investigations that have been involved in differences of opinion among scholars in this field.

If Halloran is a supporter and practitioner of critical research, Boyd-Barrett questions its role and status in the period after the demise of the Soviet Union. He suggests that critical analysis needs to liberate itself from its present mould and to focus on the real world problems which will dominate the twenty-first century, especially the weakening of nation states, the destruction of natural environments (land masses, oceans, Space), cultural conflicts, and the re-emergence of cultural cleansing in Europe. He argues that alternative modes of development have failed to sustain themselves and evidence shows that many governments in the South are not fit to govern themselves. Boyd-Barrett also criticizes Third World communication research scholars. They have spent too much time criticizing the Western models without providing a coherent communication structure in keeping with their own development needs. Consequently, it is very hard to stop Western cultural penetration, especially as most of the technological innovation and information comes from the West.

Boyd-Barrett argues that Western capitalism is still on the way to further progress and dynamism but we do not know what will happen to the existing level of inequality in the world. The information highway stems from the demand for the expansion of market and technological accessibility in the West. It is not clear in the developing world who can afford to pay for technical availability if this trend continues.

Nonetheless, there is a positive potential for critical analysis by the year 2000. The accessibility of technology with its wide angle can reflect some problems; among these is the resurgence of tribalism and cultural conflict. These are creations of a global culture which was built on the modern communication system. Western-driven private enterprise, and the challenge to indigenous cultures, brings to a global audience the triumphs and horrors of human civilization.

Whatever the impact on culture, Boyd-Barrett believes that the globalization process, driven by technological advances, will expand much further. Today, it is not clear to us what will be the impact of digital culture on people, while the globalization of Western culture in all dimensions is proceeding.

James Halloran, in his chapter, looks at trends in communication research with a focus on the international dimension. Based on his own experience in this field, going back to the early 1960s, he draws our attention to three major areas:

- A brief overview of general trends in communication research, focusing on the proposal for an international programme of critical communication research put forward in relation to the UNESCO manifesto of the early 1970s.

- A critique of the prevailing thematic structure of US communication research which, Golding argues, offers no challenge to the international status quo and serves the vested interests of the established powers. Communication research in the United States is mainly concerned with mass society, mass culture and the modernization process as the only way forward for social change. The US style communication research is preoccupied with such questions as the creation of media events, the manipulation of public opinion and the invention of persuasive topics for election campaigns.
- An identification of the foundations of this paradigm of research – new at the time in the early 1960s – in the work of Wilbur Schramm (*Mass Media and National Development*) and Daniel Lerner (*The Passing of Traditional Society*) and, later, in the establishment of the Institute for Communication Studies at Stanford University, soon the leading university in this field.

Halloran draws on his own personal experience as he considers these areas of research. Himself a key critic of US-style communication research and a leading British researcher, he starts with the highlights of the Montreal conference of 1969 and criticizes the unquestioning faith in the benefits of technological progress. By looking at the different levels of the impacts and the flows of global cultures, he brings us to the present which is more concerned with the process of globalization and the emergence of nationalism. Globalization in the 1990s is seen as the end result of a decade of deterioration and greed.

Halloran would like to see a much sharper research focus on the economic power structures of the world as they impact on international communication, the process of globalization and media development. The major requirement of the globalization process, from this point of view, is the globalization of moral responsibility, in a world where the rich pay only 4% interest on debt compared with the 17% paid by poor nations. The gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' widens daily. Why isn't more international communication research concerned with this fact? How can citizenship be a goal in the absence of information and communication systems? Halloran believes that the North must help the South, or the present order of international communication, economic and information orders will not be sustainable.

# International Communication and Globalization: Contradictions and Directions

*Oliver Boyd-Barrett*

*In this chapter, Boyd-Barrett surveys the various concepts of globalization across many different disciplines and discourses. He relates this concept to the development of international communication research through its various phases across the twentieth century. From the pigeon to the advent of satellite communication technology this chapter explores the many tensions about the research directions and contradictions in this contested field. Of great significance here was the growing discontent in the liberated ex-colonial countries, based on the realization that formal political freedom was not accompanied by freedom from the global system of capitalism.*

*In this chapter you will find a brief discussion of dependency discourse and globalization discourse, and to study of media in general. Analysis of the globalization ranges across three major camps: the positivist tradition; neo-Marxist political economy and its critique of media institutions; and the cultural studies camp, which focuses on the study of popular and mass culture, their role in the reproduction of social hegemony and inequality, and on how media texts work to create meaning. (For further information, see Johnson, 1986.)*

The concept 'globalization' is open to many meanings. Authors vary considerably in how wide a range of things they intend it to include, whether they think it is good or bad, and in which explanatory theory or model of the world they locate it. Most authors will allow that it has to do at least in part with the increasingly global reach of transnational corporations, and with the transnational character and interrelatedness of local economies. Some focus on evidence of growing cultural convergence, whose clearest manifestation is the software and hardware of transnational media products across telecommunications, computing, film, video, television, magazines, or compact disk, and the physical presence within given localities of shops, commodities (including cars, tobacco, perfume, do-it-yourself hardware, among others) and other businesses, banks or advertising agencies that are clearly recognizable as part of giant transnational if not global corporations.

Others again are more interested in 'culture' in a sense close to that used by Raymond Williams (1961) – the day-to-day expression of shared human experience – and they look for evidence of convergence in the things that people think about, the ways in which they think and in which things are expressed through everyday social practices. What they find is not so much a homogenized global culture, as a world in which, increasingly, every locality is typified by cultural hybridity and heterogeneity, subject to transnational and global forces.

The English city of Leicester, in which I write this chapter, is the home of large populations of first, second and third generation Asians, who have come to Leicester for many different reasons that relate to the entwined histories of Britain and Asia and to a range of economic and political forces which have propelled or stimulated geographical mobility. The Asian communities represent a medley of different languages, religions and histories; many Asians now purchase videos, subscribe to satellite stations, listen to radio channels, read newspapers and magazines which address one or another aspect of their identities as Asians. Some children attend ethnically distinct schools. Yet they share between them and with the white English communities a significant measure of common experience of English language, English (and global) media, awareness of political history and agendas, educational curricula, occupational aspirations and, not least, the day-to-day physicality of the city, its houses, shops, offices, factories, garages, trees and parks, roads and cars, dust, sun and rain, and knowledge of the ways in which this physicality changes from one area of the city to another, from one season to another. For the whites this presence in very large numbers of Asians represents a partly incorporated otherness which subverts what was once perceived to be a clear-cut separation of England from Asia and which intrudes on older simplicities about the separateness of Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh. The cultural mix of the City, therefore, is more complex than it once was; cultural complexity is represented among other things in gender relations, language, dress, food, commodities, and other differences which are informed and transformed by the things that are held in common. These cut across older divisions of social class. This, then, is an aspect of globalization: cultural hybridity arising from the play of global forces through British imperialism, post-war decolonization, ethnic conflict within Asia, employment opportunities, global trade.

Different emphases among scholars who write about globalization reflect allegiances to different theoretical perspectives. Lying not far behind the concern for global media products and their implications for local cultures, for instance, is a political-economy perspective whose attention is attracted, for very good reason, by the staggering concentration of economic power which is now represented by the media and mixed media/non-media corporations which produce and distribute media hardware and software globally, concentrations which are either directly interlinked with or which parallel similar but more locally specific concentrations. Even if this

perspective is now less likely to assume that global media products have a direct, pernicious implication for local culture (a view which, rightly or wrongly, tends to ascribe to local culture a purity, essentiality, indivisibility and goodness, which very often is impossible to substantiate), there is a concern that the content of global media products is determined by the dynamics of global marketing, and that economies of scale enjoyed by the 'global popular' undermine the markets for local cultural production in very many countries. The interest in cultural hybridity, on the other hand, is often fed by a cultural-studies perspective which in recent years has taken a key interest not simply in the different meanings which different members of audiences can take from media texts, but in the range of different social and cultural practices within which media are situated and consumed.

In essence, we may say that the 'globalization' concept is at the confluence of many different disciplines and discourses, variously linked, as Tomlinson illustrates (Chapter 7), to theories about mediatization, information age, Americanization, Westernization, capitalism, and postmodernity, to name but a few; these discourses, in turn, are associated with different ways of seeing and of presenting arguments, different criteria for truth-claims and different ideas as to what constitutes useful and relevant evidence. There are further practical difficulties to do with differences between specialist areas of academic work in the extent to which current literature has caught up with the demand for globalization themes, and how far relevant data have been collated.

With specific reference to the field of 'international communication', most authors are willing to acknowledge that issues of media and communication are important, if not central, to discussions of globalization, while they are equally anxious to avoid charges of 'media-centricity' (e.g. equating globalization with media exports) for the quite proper reason that media-centric analysis frequently exaggerates the role of media, marginalizes other features or dimensions of transnational and transcultural influence, and, worse yet, fails to take adequate account of the social, political, economic and cultural forces that work on and shape the media. Not least of these, of course, are the large public relations and marketing machineries of political parties and business corporations (which Maxwell, in Chapter 8, illustrates with reference to marketing technique) whose pace of growth is quickened by global processes of democratization and privatization and whose subtle and less than subtle interventions in media representations must increasingly question the model of media as autonomous agenda-setters.

While recognizing the dangers of media-centricity, there is a need for a strong though not exclusive interest in media in particular, as well as in international communication more generally. The significance of communications media has to be established with reference to their whole context: political, regulatory, economic and cultural; in addition, media activities are subject to investigation from a number of different academic disciplines. None of this diminishes the necessity, in my view, for a focused examination