Global Media

The Television Revolution in Asia

James D. White

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Publisher's Note
The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint
but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent.

For Jianglan, Jonathan and Jerome, who make it all worthwhile

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The genesis of this book was my interest in an immodest proposal. In the 1980s I was working in Japan, heavily involved with the media, both Japanese and international. Journalists love to gossip, so through conversations at the Foreign Correspondent's Club in central Tokyo I was early aware that the Japanese national public broadcaster, NHK, was developing plans to launch a 24-hour news service. I was very interested in this idea, as a step towards rectifying what seemed to me a heavy imbalance. While there was a demonstrably limited amount of accurate information about Asia circulating through the mass media in the West, I could compare that with the Asian media's extensive coverage of political, economic and social issues in the West. Information was flowing, from West to East and from East to West, but the flows were clearly unbalanced.

The NHK plans appeared to develop rapidly. They had the support of the President of NHK, Keiji Shima, who was rumored to be negotiating with ABC of the United States and with the BBC, in an attempt to get them to join as production and distribution partners. The service even had a putative name, GNN (Global News Network), which made it plain that one major purpose was to set up a rival to the rapidly expanding CNN.

As quickly as they had begun, the rumors died down. Shima lost his position, and the GNN proposal was shelved. This only heightened my curiosity, however. Why had NHK, one of the richest and most powerful broadcasting organizations in the world, been unable to push the idea of an international news channel even to the starting line, especially at a time when media curiosity about the various Asian economic "miracles" was at a height? Was there no way that an Asian point of view could be presented and heard in the West? Who "owned" the news? At a time when globalization as a theme for discussion was becoming popular in the media, were the terms of the debate to be effectively dictated by the West?

In the course of attempting to find answers to these questions, my focus widened, as I saw that the GNN case history did not stand alone, but was linked to other events both in Japan and elsewhere in Asia, especially China and Hong Kong. The real threat to the television status quo was not in fact CNN's Ted Turner, but rather an archrival, Rupert Murdoch. In 1994, having had a major impact on the media situation in the U.K. and in the U.S., Murdoch made his entry onto the stage of Asian television when he bought a controlling share in STAR TV, the first pan-Asian television service. STAR TV[1] had been made possible by Asiasat, the first satellite to cover the region, itself a strange hybrid of Hong Kong entrepreneurialism supported by a mix of wealthy Hong Kong Chinese, the Hong Kong British colonial establishment and mainland Chinese finance. Suddenly it was owned by an Australian with announced ambitions to set up a global television network. Questions about who owns and operates the media, and in whose interest, were given fresh currency. At the same time the Internet was growing exponentially, offering a completely new way to deliver and receive news, including television.

I also became convinced that the events I was looking at reflected in part attempts to deal with macro processes of change which can be labeled 'globalization.' From that perspective, the condition of the television industry, of the production of news, and in particular of the public service broadcaster appear in a symbolic role, metaphors for the reconfiguration of relationships between the global and the local.

However, the initial spark of intellectual curiosity remained: can a perceived imbalance in understanding between cultures be redressed? Is there any possibility of international (between nations) communications becoming a two-way street? At the same time as I was researching this book I was acting as producer and writer of a television series, entitled "Living in a Global World," which looked at many different aspects of globalization, based on interviews with a wide range of thinkers in the field, academic and non-academic. If I try to choose one key word which emerged from all those interviews it was "balance"—the need for it, or the lack of it, in the processes of globalization as we know it now.

Recent events have only reinforced the ambivalence surrounding the situation of information flows between cultures. If the 1991 Gulf war pushed CNN into the center of the international stage, the 2003 Iraq war found another and unexpected broadcast star, the Arabic satellite news channel Al-Jazeera. While CNN competed with Fox News and CNBC for the jingoism awards in their coverage of the "war for Iraqi freedom," Al-Jazeera showed the bloody side of the conflict, attracting the vehement criticism of the British

and American governments. Jehane Noujaim, an Egyptian-American film-maker made a documentary, "Control Room," about the TV station as it covered the war. In an interview he explained why he wanted to make the film:

> I have traveled back and forth between the U.S. and the Middle East my whole life, and I've always been interested in the fact that there are completely different stories (in the two regions concerning) the same world events. How is it possible to have a peaceful world, people talking to each other and understanding each other, when there are completely different views being told to the people? (Schecter, 2004)

Ultimately balance or fairness was at the center of Shima's rationale for setting up GNN, just as it is the primary rationale for Al-Jazeera, which claims "to cover all viewpoints with objectivity, integrity and balance."

THREE CASE HISTORIES

This book has an empirical/historical core. Empirically, my goal is to describe the actual situation concerning information flows as revealed through a comparative study of three television case histories in Asia. The primary case histories focus on the roles of the national public service broadcasters of Japan and China, NHK and CCTV, and their reactions to globalization. A supplementary story looks at the checkered history of STAR TV and more generally of the activities of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation in Asia, both seen as exemplars of a specific aspect of globalization, the emergence of the global corporation.

These case histories are based on an extensive review of the literature, and on interview-based field research in Tokyo, Beijing, Kunming, Hong Kong, Honolulu and London, mostly carried out in 1997 and 1998, and updated by visits to Japan, China and Hong Kong in 2002.

It is my suggestion that the ongoing discussion on globalization has tended to be more descriptive and speculative than analytical or empirical.[2] I have attempted to give my contribution to this discussion a factual anchor, by linking my conclusions on the nature of globalization directly to the findings of my research. All three case histories are based on interviews with leading participants in exemplar events:

- the attempts to set up GNN, and to 'internationalize' news at NHK;
- CCTV's defense of its 'turf,' under pressure from bureaucratic upheavals such as the creation of the Ministry of Information Industries in 1998 and the emergence of major commercial rivals like Beijing TV,

at the same time as it has itself become a major revenue earner and its
role has changed following China's entry into the WTO; and

- the establishment, sale and erratic progress of STAR TV.

This is contextualized through a broader discussion about the role of public
service broadcasters, and of information and communication generally.
Finally, my approach has a futures orientation from the outset, and con-
cludes with a causal layered analysis of the case histories, which is used to
revisit the initial theoretical mapping, in an imaginative attempt to gauge
some of the impact of these complex, fast-moving changes.

By looking at the case histories in some detail, my intent is to depict
some of the workings of political power and the media. By delineating the
pattern, or structure, of specific examples of the processes of globalization,
and to attempt to describe their impact, I hope to suggest ways in which such
patterns might change in the future.

Pattern delineation is based on asking, first, which sets of actors are
helping to demarcate time-space boundaries through policy, regulation, own-
ership and personal practices, in a context where "satellite, digital and fibre
optic communications are supplying new definitions of, and imperatives for,
time and space" (Ferguson, 1990: 170). The description of pattern and the
identification of which actors are involved, and the process of their involve-
ment, I take to be basic first steps in trying to see how the complex system of
globalization works, in practice. Careful observation is designed to describe
histories, recognize patterns, and identify themes: in turn, these are the early
building blocks for the development of the metaphors we need to help navi-
gate our way forward, which I see as the essential mission of futures studies.

In Japan, the actors include state organs like the former Ministry of
Posts and Telecommunications; quasi-governmental organizations like the
national public broadcaster, NHK; and a cast of numerous others, including
the commercial TV stations, the manufacturers of electronic equipment, the
national space industry, cable and satellite operators, and program suppli-
ers, both domestic and foreign. Finally, there is the audience for national and
international television.

In China and Hong Kong, this study looks at the constant adjustments
in the positions of the former Ministry of Radio, Film and Television, of the
national broadcaster CCTV, and of local TV stations, as they dealt with gen-
eral changes in Chinese society and the specific impact of the first commer-
cial TV satellite station in Asia, STAR TV from Hong Kong. The nature of
the players is generally similar to those in Japan, with both public and the
private sector actors, and with the manufacturers of 'hard' equipment like

satellite dishes and the operators of communications networks like cable TV, as well as the suppliers of the 'soft': information, news and entertainment (my focus is primarily on the 'soft').

Because I am looking at flows, which by their nature have at least the potential to flow out as well as in, I also examine how both NHK and CCTV are attempting to remake themselves as international broadcasters. Again, it is important not to lose sight of the audience, at home or abroad.

Both case histories involve a highly varied cast of international actors, many of them not Asian. They include multinational corporations like CNN and the Hughes Corporation, transnationals like News Corporation and Asiasat, and national public corporations like the BBC, which are re-inventing themselves as hybrid public commercial organizations.

For all these diverse organizations there is one key variable: they all have to operate in a context which is no longer bounded by the nation-state. For the young industry of television, this is a new situation. For ancient countries like China, it is also a situation seemingly fraught with challenges to an always complex society.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

After pattern delineation, my second line of inquiry is based on asking what is at stake for the state, for the commercial interests, for the producers and for the 'consumers' of 'information flows.' This question is fundamental, in order to tackle larger contextual issues about the nature of globalization or the impact of information in modern society.

At the level of the nation-state, the debate on information flows has long been framed in terms as abstract as its own phraseology. Reference is made to national security or to cultural imperialism, in its turn an abstraction based on a simplistic equating of the state with a heavily constructed concept or co-option of culture. But as revealed through the case studies, the real priorities for the government bureaucrats charged with policy development and imple-mentation are often at once more pragmatic and more mundane. The nation-state (or the elements that constitute it) can no longer be equated with a larger cultural order, or a one-size-fits-all economic paradigm.

In both China and Japan, government officials were plainly as much in-terested in bureaucratic turf battles and fights over who was to gain advan-tage from administering the new technologies like the Internet and overseeing the expanding role of television as they were with larger questions of national interest. In China a layer of complexity was added by the overwhelming ques-tion of how, in reality, a totalitarian state bureaucracy handles "one country,

two systems," in the sense that official China still lays dubious claim to be both socialist and capitalist.

One reality that both situations seemed to share was fragmentation of what had appeared as stable situations. Both NHK and CCTV had long enjoyed a position of security, whether measured in economic terms (an assured income from license fees for NHK, government subsidy for CCTV); social terms (a position as the stable reference point for information on how the world of the nation was running); cultural terms (key participant in the "imagined community" of the people); or technological terms (NHK was the defender of the nation's technological honor in developing high-definition TV, while both CCTV and NHK played important roles as the representative of the nation in the development of a 'necessary' (for the nation) technology like satellites.

Globalization threatened those positions. Commercial rivals seemed to undermine the rationale for a public broadcaster, as did technological developments like the Internet. Multiple sources of news and data rendered a monopoly position on information untenable, and the very notion of globalization fundamentally upset the whole idea of community, which suddenly could be as big as the audience for world cup soccer or Princess Diana's funeral, or as specific as viewers of a channel devoted to golf or subscribers to an online discussion group, situated everywhere and nowhere.

In both countries there was a sense of having to deal with a force beyond anybody's control, a tiger leaping towards the latest level of modernization, ridden by organizations wielding technological developments which were a reality well before the bureaucracy or the legislature in either country was able to comprehend the consequences of their deployment. Attempting to call the shots on which direction the tiger might jump was a complex, risky business. Japanese officials interviewed for this research sometimes seemed daunted by the task, while those involved in establishing STAR TV described themselves as making something up—pan-Asian television—as they were going along.

Internationally, what was at stake had since the sixties been expressed in terms of one freedom or another, most commonly of choice or of access to information. In the 1980s this rubric had largely been swept aside by a new ideology, of "open" markets, which usually meant the right to enter another nation's markets.

Television had moved or been pushed into the arms of the global marketplace, creating a new international broadcast industry, which sometimes seemed beyond the reach of national governments to control. The situation raised fundamental questions of political and cultural sovereignty, as, for

example, the concept of "language-area" superseded the territorial state as the target audience for broadcasting, already a well-established reality with Cantonese-speaking China. Again, the technology—in this case, that of cable and satellites—had developed at such a pace that "rogue" commercial broadcasters (and even rogue commercial satellites) were in operation before international law was able to catch up.

While the new rhetoric implied a stepping away from traditional kinds of regulation, the nation-state continued its battle to hold the center. In Japan, the actual result of de facto international television arriving in the home was effective re-regulation, while in China the intention was plainly to continue the center's attempts to exert control. It remains open to question how successful such regulation or attempts to control will be in the long term, because the object of the regulation or control—in this case, television—is caught up in changes well beyond the capability of the nation-state to command, to the degree that the structure of the industry itself may be transformed. As Tracey puts it, "Broadcasting in general, and NHK in particular, is no more than a bit player in a game of global proportions and yet it finds itself faced with theoretical decommissioning precisely because of these wider events" (Tracey, 1998: 224).

At the same time, globalization must be seen as a process, and one which is embedded in inherited social structures and relationships. The process of change is itself in no way orderly or linear, and there is no guarantee that it will produce anything necessarily "new": but equally, the notion that future directions are inevitably or inexorably connected with the "old" is in no way self-evident.

As a result, when that process is tracked through the case study approach used here, the findings can be surprising. It is notable, for example, that the position of STAR TV today—after many years and huge expenditures and considerable shifts in policy—is not dissimilar to the parameters for the Asian operation of GNN sketched out in 1990. In 2004 the president of NHK announced plans for a 24-hour news service, specifically citing the examples of CNN and BBC. Maybe GNN was simply an idea ahead of its time.

In summary, this volume examines the distribution of information around the globe through a study of the history and contemporary situation of two Asian national television broadcasters and one international media conglomerate with pretensions to be 'global.' My specific focus is on the creation of international news. Major findings include:

- The changes that have engulfed television can be seen as emblematic of globalization at work. Institutions like NHK and CCTV are in the

front line of dealing with globalization, and the debates about the role
of public service broadcasters reflect both the threat and the potential
of globalization.

- Globalization pressures—be they commercial, technological or symbolic—lead to the fragmentation of heretofore apparently stable situations, but the resultant changes are not predictable, and should not be regarded as resulting in an inevitable homogeneity.
- The context for these changes is one no longer bounded by the nation-state.
- Non-state actors are often the drivers of change, in large part because of their adaptability in the face of rapid technological developments and of a global situation of great complexity—but they are not necessarily the beneficiaries of change. At the same time the more nimble state organs may well flourish under the new regime suggested by globalization, or lead resistance to it.
- A constant preoccupation of the nation-state is how to handle information, control of which is a means of wielding power. Globally, flows of information are plainly controlled by a few institutions and dominated by a handful of nations, but the potential for this control to be subverted is growing.

Chapter One

The Globalization Context

APPROACHING GLOBALIZATION: SIX CHARACTERISTICS

This section describes six characteristics of globalization I believe to be ger-
mane to this study, supported by and giving context to the case studies. It is
followed by a description of some of the processes of globalization, also ref-
erenced to the case histories.

    I take an explicitly non-reductionist approach to research, what Mosca
describes as "multiply determined." I opt not to attribute historical or social
change to an essential economic or cultural cause, as it seems to me that
globalization by definition cannot be examined through isolated practices.
This is also the first of the six characteristics of globalization.

Complexity cannot be reduced to a core essentiality

There is a well-entrenched tendency—by critics as well as by endorsers of the
phenomenon—to see globalization in economic terms. As applied to the
media, the term 'globalization' is apt to be embedded in the language of po-
litical economy, and to focus on the financial power of the media conglom-
erates. The impression given is that of unstoppable juggernauts beaming
their consumerist messages around the world (see Negrine and
Papathanassopoulos, 1990; Mosco, 1996; Martin and Schumann, 1997;
Greider, 1997). The examples—and the general conclusions drawn from
them—tend to be taken from the Western media context. However, when
applied to specific case histories of how the process of globalization actually
impacts the local, these paradigmatic views may not always square with the
reality revealed by closer examination of events and consequences.

    The fate of public service broadcasters in a globalized world is an in-
teresting example. In fact the most popular operational model for television

was (and mostly still is) to function as some kind of public agency, until quite recently operating largely outside market economics (with the U.S. situation as an exception). Despite being forced to face a highly competitive environment in recent years, few if any public broadcasters have disappeared.[1]

Certainly, they have been forced to adapt. The swing factor was the expansion of information carrying capacity, whether by cable or satellite or, following digitalization, by conventional broadcast channels.

Nevertheless, the public service broadcasters have been remarkable robust in the face of great pressure to change. They are also institutions of weight: according to IDATE (2000, 2001, 2003), three public broadcasters (ARD, NHK and BBC) regularly appear in the top 13 media groups in the world. CCTV and the Indian *Prasar Bharati* might also be included, if there were a meaningful way of comparing the value of their networks and resources with those outside China and India.

Success is relative
As revealed through the case study approach, a note of caution needs to be introduced into consideration of the role of giant media corporations. A simple listing of investments and shareholding and gross revenues should not be equated with invulnerability or inevitability.

In fact, the Western media and communications conglomerates have often been remarkably unsuccessful, at least in Asia. As examples, leading American media operations have failed outright (DirecTV in Japan), have been forced to radically change their corporate strategy in order to survive (MTV in Asia), or had meager success at best (News Corporation in Japan, Time Warner in China and Japan). The conglomerate featured in the STAR TV case study, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, is the media company that has tried hardest to ride the global wave into Asia, with limited success, and at the expense of a huge investment and at the cost of sacrificing any idea of editorial independence.

The remarkable flip-flops in policy that characterize Rupert Murdoch's corporate history in China or Japan—contrasted with the relatively consistent policy development of NHK and CCTV—demonstrate that the story of global mass media systems is still being written.

Globalization is about relationships
In one sense globalization is about communications, which in turn is about relationships (what Castells calls networks). These are characterized by their self-referential, interdependent, dynamic and ever-changing nature.

On the micro scale, Burawoy et al (2000) have attempted to map out a "global ethnography." The intention is to show how "concrete, lived experience

can sharpen the abstraction of globalization theories into more precise and meaningful conceptual tools" (xiv). In describing the processes of global television, it is easy to lose sight of the person in the sitting room looking at the television. Cultural, economic, social and political influences arrive in the home unannounced and sometimes uninvited—but not unchanged in the process of transmission, nor in the manner of reception.

The complexity of the phenomenon of globalization is also revealed on the macro scale, where the resistances to it may be as meaningful as its superficially apparent success. As revealed by taking a detailed look at cases studies, globalization is a complex interplay between economic, cultural and political factors. The political stage on which this takes place is still primarily that of the nation-state. Referencing the CCTV case history, the politics and economics may be an interacting mix of the national (the MRFT being engulfed by the MII) and the local (the rise to prominence of regional TV stations like Shanghai TV).

And while national governments as a whole often may be slow to react to rapidly changing situations—which is a characteristic of globalization— specific institutions of government (like the Japanese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications) or institutions associated with the government (like the BBC, NHK or CCTV) may be much more successful not only in reacting but in fact in turning the environment of change to their advantage. Public broadcasters start from a position of considerable strength in the societies in which they are embedded, and often have a symbiotic affinity with one another. NHK and CCTV, for example, have long had a close working relationship, and employees of both often use strikingly similar language to describe the sensitive place their organizations occupy in their respective societies.

Political power has been reconfigured

In the political domain, the role of the state is in the process of changing in fundamental ways, and in many cases is being fragmented due to the state's inability to react with suppleness to ongoing processes of change which are distinguished by speed, by interconnectedness and by the compression of space. This is a situation of constant, necessary flux (Sassen, 1996).

Traditional political and economic barometers are inadequate to measure the scope of what is going on, in particular when sovereignty-free actors, like multinationals and certain NGOs, effectively operate their own micro economic systems.[2] If television broadcasting is seen as a process, then what is happening with global television is a development of that process to the point where judicial or territorial barriers are "accommodated" or sidelined or radically reconfigured.

A contradictory process

Television is a technology, and technological developments matter. At the moment where technologies reach a take-off point, they make possible the tremendous accelerations in speed, extensions in reach and lowerings in cost of all forms of communications (including transportation) which in turn produce global linkages, the strands out of which the web of globalization is spun.

However technology is ultimately a means to an end, which can shape it in numerous different ways, most often in terms of culture. Ultimately globalization has a major impact on culture, which is also the source of the most important resistances to it. Television is emblematic of this ambivalence.

On the one hand, television could serve as the glue for a new universal culture—or as the vehicle for global advertising, an acolyte to the global market. On the other hand, the evidence to date is that global television only succeeds in proportion to the extent it caters to the local. National public television broadcasters, as an example, have not only survived but often flourished in the face of globalization. One of the many conundrums of globalization is that it seems to encourage regionalization and localization, an intrinsic tension. In that sense globalization is about the reworking of the relationship between the local and the global. Globalization is a contradictory process.

The global and the local

Globalization is most often equated with growing global economic integration, which at its most rudimentary is characterized by the Financial Times of London as "falling trade barriers, co-ordinated economic policies and single currencies" (Patel, 2001). It is also commonly identified with Americanization, or more precisely the alignment of other economies, currencies and stock markets with that of the U.S. By spring 2001, for example, correlation between U.S. and foreign stocks had reached 0.75 (where 1 represents synchronized movement and 0 indicates relative independence) (ibid.: 5).

This sense of things coming together is also probably the commonest perception underlying globalization in its conceptualization as something larger than a purely economic phenomenon. In an interview David Harvey[3] speculated on how the term globalization achieved its sudden popularity, and identified the publication of the famous NASA "Earthrise" photo in 1968 as a moment of transformation, the presentation of an iconic image which told the inhabitants of the earth how small and vulnerable was the space we share. Indeed, the language used to describe globalization is all about integration and time and space compression, about economic, social and technological forces weaving a real world wide web, so that "what happens here" can be directly and instantaneously impacted by a distant event.

Giddens (1994, 1999, 2000) in particular has focused on how the local interacts with the global when "things come together."[4] He sees the emergence of globalization influenced above all by developments in systems of communication and transportation. These in many cases had their roots in the 19th century, as witness the development of international time standards, driven by the needs of the railway and the telegraph (Palmer, 2002). The globalization difference was created in large measure by the birth of instantaneous electronic communication on a global scale, signaled by the rapid development of communication satellite technology from the 1960s on.

Giddens also points out that globalization is not only about large-scale systems, but also about the impact on the local, and conversely how "local lifestyle habits have become globally consequential" (1994: 5). He goes on to argue that globalization is a complex mixture of processes, which often act in contradictory ways. A focus on one part of the operation of the media in one particular region as presented in this book allows us to see how the constitutive elements of globalization interact with each other, be they cultural, or economic, or political, or social. It also paints a picture of a process that is not unidirectional. For globalization develops regional centers of power, and institutional alternatives to the status quo, which may or may not form the context for the future, but which certainly impact the way the processes develop.

Another lens to look through is provided by Michael Shapiro, with his concept of the "sovereignty-exchange nexus" (1991, 1992). Globalization is about the reconfiguration of historically fixed relationships between localizing and globalizing forces, the "most pervasive modern tension . . . between the various impulses behind sovereignty norms and those behind relations of exchange" (1992: 5). Different social entities engage in identity securing projects, in attempts to adjust to the new configurations and the fragmentation of existing values in the to and fro of sovereignty (local) and exchange (global). This provides a useful theoretical reference point for the case studies outlined in this research, and also serves as a succinct description of the bind in which the public service broadcasters find themselves in a globalized world.

In her discussion of the "spatialities and temporalities of the global," Sakia Sassen (2000) underlines the significance of the ways in which the global and the local overlap and interact.

> Much of social science has operated with the assumption of the nation-state as a container, representing a unified spatiotemporality. Much of history, however, has failed to confirm this assumption . . . and the global restructurings of today threaten to erode the usefulness of this proposition for what is an expanding arena of sociological reality (215).

Her point is to use an examination of the workings of globalization as a critique of an idea commonly embedded in the social sciences, that the national and the non-national are somehow mutually exclusive. Sassen proposes a different perspective, one well supported by the case histories of global television that follow:

> Thinking about the global in terms of distinct spatialities embedded in the territory of the national yet retaining their own specificity helps us analytically to apprehend that a global dynamic or process may partly operate through a national institution (228).

National institutions, such as public service broadcasters, can internalize the global and become part of a global space.

Actually making the connection between local sites and global dynamics is a daunting task, one for which ethnographers are well suited, as their task is to study others in their own space and time. This starting point fits in neatly with Sassen's (1991) linking of the global city of high-flying executives and bankers with the armies of immigrants that make their lives possible. Burawoy (2000: 29) describes three strategies adopted by his team of 'global ethnographers' to counter the tendency to see globalization as something huge, powerful and inevitable. I have attempted to apply all three strategies to my examination of national public service broadcasters pushed onto a global stage. One is to see global forces as constituted at a distance, and therefore to focus on the ways in which they are resisted or negotiated. The second is to see those forces themselves as the product of flows of people, things and ideas, the actual global connections between sites. The third, which I shall address in my final chapter on futures, is to see those forces and connections as imaginative constructs, a realization that leads to the possibility of countervailing movements exposing the hollowness of the wizard of globalization, and taking control of a no longer distant world.

THE PROCESSES OF GLOBALIZATION

In the section that follows I shall attempt to outline some of the processes of globalization that emerge from a review of the literature on globalization, and which serve as reference points for the narratives of globalization in action which constitute the case histories.

WAVES OF TRANSFORMATION

The three characteristics Giddens has identified as typifying modernity are the pace of change, the scope of change and the new nature of institutions,

with modern cities cited as an example. They lead to his vision of a world of change. "As different areas of the globe are drawn into interconnection with one another, waves of social transformation crash across virtually the whole of the earth's surface" (1990: 6).

The waves of economic and social transformation are not necessarily all generated in the West, although the western social sciences tend to wear cultural blinkers in this regard. The West continues to see itself as the center of the world: the east is still 'far' and the 'Orient' is still an object of knowledge and of power, as Said described it (1978). This is a schema which has long rankled with other regions of the world, especially those with strong cultural traditions of their own. In the 1990s Asian readers turned books like "The Japan That Can Say No" (Ishihara and Morita, 1991 and 1989), "The China That Can Say No" (Song, Zhang, and Qiao, 1996), and even "The Asia That Can Say No" (Mahathir and Ishihara, 1994)[5] into best sellers. More recently the sudden emergence of highly popular Arab satellite TV stations like al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya, broadcasting on satellites with names like Arabsat and Nilesat can be seen as part of the same reaction. As long as the West holds the institutional power that permits it to construct Asian or Arab Other(s)—in other words as long as the dice are loaded and the relationship is unequal—the blinkers will stay on.

But one consequence of globalization is that the resistances to that power take on a new strength and vitality. In describing how the subset of Japanese intellectual discourse known as "discussion about the Japanese" (*nihonjinron*) have developed, Morely and Robins show how it has moved from a definition of Japan's identity in terms of deviations from Western norms to a point where "the Japanese would occupy the position of the centre and of the subject which determines other particularities in its own universal term" (1995: 164). This is precisely what Shima's Global News Network was all about: diagrammatic maps showing how the satellite news network would have worked reveal Tokyo positioned on top of that globe (see figure 1, p. 133).

Such resistances are not met with good grace. At a time when Japan was seen as a potent rival to the United States, Fallows could write about "Containing Japan" (1989). Huntington's famous 1993 Foreign Affairs article ruminating on "The Clash of Civilizations" especially focused on the rise of China posing a fundamental challenge to the American-dominated status quo. The second Bush administration went out of its way to denigrate and even silence al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya during the 2003 war in Iraq.

Maybe the biggest lesson that can be learnt from the checkered history of STAR TV, which is at the center of this book, is that this resistance is real

enough to alter the nature of the flow in dramatic and fundamental ways. Despite an investment measured in billions of dollars, STAR TV's pretensions to be a regional broadcaster covering one third of the world's population were reduced to becoming "a conglomeration of half a dozen local broadcasters slugging it out market by market"(Granitsas, 2000). STAR TV's original business model, in so far as there was one, was founded on the notion of Hong Kong as a communications hub, with a primary but ill-defined audience of middle-class Asians, who were imagined by STAR TV's Chinese owners to be primarily Chinese. In the event, STAR TV's biggest success was in India, a fact that its owners, Chinese and Australian/American, had difficulty adjusting to. At least in its potential, globalization can be about de-centering. The waves of transformation can break in unexpected ways.

WHERE IS THE NATION, THE STATE, THE NATION-STATE?

One of the intellectual traditions of the social sciences is a tendency to focus on one dominant rationale to explain the global rush of events. For Wallerstein and many others, it is primarily economic, or more narrowly, capitalist, or some subset of this thinking, such as the tension between security requirements and economic interests, or the demands of an apparently omnipotent market place. The inclination is to start with the nation-state as the unit of analysis and ignore larger cultural communities, such as the great world religions; or scorn the smaller units, such as ethnic minorities; or belittle the increasing number of organizations which can choose not to "see" the nation-state or to step around it, such as is sometimes the case with the international communications organizations that are the subject of this study; or underestimate institutions that reject the authority of a particular nation-state, such as the Falun Gong.

I am not here supporting the notion of Smith (1990), Appadurai (1996) and others, that the nation-state has effectively lost much of its significance or is on the way to becoming obsolete. As is clear from the example of the manner in which the former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) in Japan has effectively remade itself in order to deal with the new realities of international communications, there is every reason to believe the sovereign state—or some elements of it—is quite capable of living with a globally connected world, and indeed of thriving on the connections. For the time being, this seems to be the case with the national public service broadcasters that appear in this study.

But as Hobsbawm (1983: 13) has argued, we are dealing with an *invented* tradition, an exercise in social engineering. The nation-state still has an important role, and the connections between states still matter, but in

order to survive in a world of exponential change, they and their constituent components, such as political parties, have to recreate themselves, constantly.

Already there exist virtual parallel worlds (or as Appadurai terms them, "imagined worlds"), where developments are fast and social connections are made with no reference to flags or borders or national self-interest, as well as the "cultural communes" identified by Castells (1997) as providing viable alternatives for the construction of meaning in a global society. As Castells describes it, control of the nation-state becomes just one way among many to assert power. The nation-state as an institution has no privileged right to continue as it was while the world of which it is a constituent part changes. In Raymond Williams' words, "the nation-state in its classical European forms is at once too large and too small for the range of real social purposes" (1983: 197).

Sassen (2000) sees the global as a partial condition, a project in the making, but warns against any conclusion that the global and the national are discrete conditions, excluding each other. On the contrary, it is the fact that they constantly overlap and interact that distinguishes the world we live in. At the same time, in their close analysis of how the quantitive indicators of globalization have often been misinterpreted or their extent and novelty exaggerated Sutcliffe and Glyn (1999) conclude that, while it is reasonable to assume that changing global structures will tend to alter the political areas in which local or national autonomy exists, this can not be equated with the idea of globalization simply rendering the politics of smaller units, such as the national state, redundant.

In one sense, the fact that television signals transmitted by satellite ignore national boundaries is only one reminder among many that the post-Westphalian world of nation-states has never been quite what it appears. A fairly neutral definition of nation-state might run along the lines of "a political entity consisting of a people with some common cultural experience (nation) who also share a common political authority (state) recognized by other sovereignties (nation-states)." The key concepts here revolve around ideas of cultural homogeneity and political unity but as Dittmer and Kim (1993) point out these have no universal validity, either in terms of ethnic group membership (a majority of contemporary nation-states have very large "minority" populations), or with regard to physical boundary and linguistic community (in half the countries of the world less than 70 percent of the population speak the same language). In order to reach a claimed 98% of the population, India's national radio network AIR broadcasts in 21 regional languages (Gill, 2001).

Historically, however, television has been national, an identification central to the whole notion of the public service broadcaster and traditionally a measure of the success of the reach of commercial broadcasters. The national broadcaster is also part of an ongoing process, and has come to play an important role in the construction of the relationship between nation and state. But the environment in which that process develops has changed.

The new context in which international television is being developed is a "global system marked by a variety of borders, frontiers, and bridges among states and other entities such as corporations, organizations, and diasporic communities" (Nagel, 2000: 160). Nagel goes on to list and supply examples of political, economic, cultural, social and legal boundaries and to identify at least one substructure that underlies the global system that rarely draws attention, the "global economy of desire" (to which I would add the global infrastructure of crime).

Reflecting on some of the consequences of changes (or the perception of changes) in the status of the nation-state as they impact the world of broadcasting, Dyson, Humphreys et al (1988) point to a paradigm change in regulatory policies, from a conception of regulation as "trusteeship" for the national cultural heritage to regulation as an exercise in 'international gamesmanship" (308).

> West European governments seemed to be involved in a difficult but common learning process: learning about the implications for national power and prosperity of international interdependency, learning from domestic problems of policy design and implementation, and being 'taught' by new media conglomerates which displayed great knowledge and political sophistication and were often emerging as well-coordinated 'global' actors (328).

While I believe it to be true that the pathfinders in the 'learning process' are indeed often the commercial media concerns, I question the notion that they are any more sophisticated or well-coordinated, or indeed truly global, than their national public service rivals. Globalization does not necessarily handicap the institutions of the state: on the contrary, it may ultimately make them stronger, albeit transformed.

YEARNING TO BE SOVEREIGNTY FREE

Overall the state is more and more hampered by its mandate. Rosenau (1990) makes a cogent case that:

> states are limited by the very considerations that are usually regarded as the source of their strengths. To regard a state as bound by its sovereign

responsibilities—the need to monitor the vast array of issues that compromise the global agenda and then to allocate resources among them in order to preserve and enhance its integrity and welfare—is to underscore its vulnerabilities and its inability to concentrate prerogatives and energies upon a few selective goals (36).

The corollary is that *sovereignty-free* actors, including multinational corporations, international organizations and certain ethnic and religious groups, can concentrate their resources on the pursuit of limited objectives. CNN is an excellent example of such an actor, able to invent and reinvent itself as an international news organization, to the point where for a decade after Tiananmen Square it was widely acknowledged as often helping to shape the international events it reported on: a remarkable metamorphosis for a local television station from Georgia.

Other examples might include the world's first global policeman, the Drug Enforcement Agency, which has turned its *raison d'être,* America's "War on Drugs," into a worldwide jihad; or an international emergency relief agency like Médecins Sans Frontières, which, with its promise to deliver "borderless" medical care, very consciously tries to avoid playing the national political games of its famous progenitor, the Red Cross.

The less an actor is able to concentrate and be "sovereignty-free," the greater its loss of effectiveness, and the higher its inability to deal with parallel imagined worlds. The oldest UN body, and arguably one of its most successful, is the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which long flourished precisely because of its narrow focus on what used to be a clearly defined field, with the definitions written by the monopoly telecoms carriers of the rich nation-states. Today the ITU has to deal with a fast-moving world, where international telecommunications are open to a wide variety of opportunistic commercial concerns,[6] and used for applications like the World Wide Web which were not even conceived of until 1989.

As a result, when the Secretary-General of the ITU gives a speech on globalization he has to give equal weight to the notion that the ITU is founded on the principle of national sovereignty and to an insistence that a key function of the ITU is "to minimize the obstacles that prevent the development of a global market for telecommunications services," obstacles which include "national boundaries, restrictive practices, risk avoidance and plain ignorance of what opportunities are available" (Tarjanne, 1994: 7). In other words, he has to uphold the legitimacy of the nation-state system, at the same time as boosting a major cause for the loss of that legitimacy.

One consequence of having to serve two masters may be an extremely laborious decision making process, which is incapable of keeping abreast of

technological development. Thus the development of global standards for high-definition television was effectively driven by regional standards organizations (European, Japanese and American), which have the heavy involvement of interested multinationals (Dupagne and Seel, 1998).

Another result is that organizations with a wider remit, like the supranational World Trade Organization, end up taking over issues directly relevant to global communications, such as the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS—effective from January, 1995) and the 1997 WTO telecommunications agreement (requiring the 68 signatory countries to open their markets to foreign telecoms companies). They also have a heavy influence on the development of an organization like the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which since 1996 has become the global watchdog defining and enforcing protections for intellectual property rights on the Internet.

This concept, that the disembedding of social institutions which Giddens (1991) comments on has become a boon to those actors in a position to take advantage of it, is an important key to some of the apparent anomalies of globalization. It helps explain, for example, why Taiwan, virtually alone among the nations of East Asia, was able not only to avoid the acute recession which affected all its neighbors in 1998, but instead register an economic growth rate that ranked fifth in the world. Thanks to the efforts of the People's Republic of China, Taiwan is effectively locked out of most of the major international bodies, and it is this status as the outsider which does not belong that enabled it to flourish while all its neighbors were suffering (Economist, 1998).[7]

It also provides a context to the strange history of STAR TV, a gadfly company originally owned by a Hong Kong Chinese entrepreneur, which launched a pan-Asian television service on a reconditioned satellite owned in equal part by the entrepreneur's father, by an investment arm of the Chinese government, and by a colonial era British Hong Kong telecoms company. STAR TV was able to find and develop audiences in Asia at a speed which was literally beyond the capability of local governments to regulate. This nimbleness was a matter of corporate policy, driven by necessity: however, the company was totally unprepared for and even unaware of its own initial success.[8] In the process of this chaotic development, STAR TV demonstrated clearly how inadequate were old notions of broadcasting sovereignty. Together cable and satellite broadcasting have in many cases rendered obsolete the idea that the state, small or large, can strictly regulate the broadcasting industry.

Where does this leave the national public service broadcaster? Would the BBC be what it is without the first "B"? Although BBC World lays claim

to being independent and international, in reality its only raison d'etre is its association with the BBC. On the other hand, did Shima's idea of a *Global News Network* ever stand a chance of success, with its presumed lack of a national base—or was that indeed a misnomer, as Japanese finance would presumably have insisted on Japanese control?

The history of a company like News Corporation in Asia seems to provide the answer about whether broadcast companies, no matter how buccaneering they appear, really function independent of the nation. As Wark (1994) points out, the opposite appears to be the case:

> the more global capitalism becomes, and the more it desires the global market, the more it also requires the state to administer the referents the market connects and coordinates, and to police the veracity of information companies issue about themselves. Free-market utopians thought they could escape from the state along the vectors of the globalized market, and indeed they have escaped antiquated state regulation. Marxist pessimists correctly saw the dangers in all this for democratic governments and national social forces like trade unions, but missed one paradoxical aspect of this movement. As capital moves in an ever more global space, trying to free itself from the regulatory net of individual states, it flies by one set of nets into a space where it needs another beneath it. It needs a new administration of the referents without which globalization is always incomplete. (210)

ACKNOWLEDGING COMPLEXITY

In the globalization literature, references to complexity are ubiquitous. For Appadurai (1996), it is a complex interactive system; for Smith (1990: 177) today's emerging global culture is "context-less, a true melange of disparate components drawn from everywhere and nowhere"; for Giddens (1990: 64) globalization is the "intensification of worldwide social relations," with the distant impinging on and shaping the local, and vice versa.

It is argued here that the complexity has "thickened" radically in the last 20 to 30 years, so that, for example, an industry and a popular cultural institution like television has gone from a traditional, national, relatively straightforward base to become part of "very complex politico-economic systems comprised of hundred or even thousands of individual participants and the organizations they represent" (Dupagne and Seel, 1998: 294).

The challenge is to construct a narrative or a framework open enough in conceptualization that it is able to deal with the global condition, in all its complexity. Giddens (1990) has called for a move away from the reliance on the idea of a defined, bounded system, a "society," to an analysis of how