

Globalization of Media: Key Issues and Dimensions

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Abstract

This review paper discusses globalization of media and trends unifying widely different societies, integrating them into one World. Like all popular concepts meant to cover a variety of phenomena, both "interdependence" and "globalization" have many meanings. Developments have been increasingly characterized not by their growth dynamics but by their links to the process of globalization. Geographical closeness or cultural proximity helps media cross borders. This paper highlights that although American media play a prominent role in the global scene, media industries from a number of other countries are also heavily across the world. A handful of firms dominate the globalize part of the media system. Cable and satellite TV, which has been familiar to most Americans, Canadians, and some Europeans for years, is now expanding in most other countries of the world. Among the main issues in globalization of communications media are transborder data flow, cultural imperialism, media and, the flow of information. It discusses the key issues of the power of media ability to intervene in the course of events and to affect their outcome like: Media Markets, Audiences, Advertisers, Finance and Creative Content

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1. Introduction

Globalization of media is not a term of global nature. As Sparks (2000) has argued, no media is genuinely global in nature. In addition, the so-called global media's audience is 'too small, too rich and too English-speaking to be considered inclusive.' There is little evidence that supports the existence of a global public sphere and the public sphere remains largely state-oriented. There is no question that all these globalizing trends are made possible with the help of mass media at both the domestic and international level.

This process of "globalization" is often portrayed as a positive force which is unifying widely different societies, integrating them into a "global village", and enriching all in the process. It is variously described as an inevitable by-product of human evolution and progress, as if it were an organic process, governed by the laws of nature. However, globalization is not necessarily a natural progression emerging out of the ordinary communication and interaction of people and cultures around the world. Rather, it results from eliberate human choice by a powerful group of nations, transnational corporations (TNCs) and international organizations which have stakes in the process. The new

communications and information technologies have provided methods for large corporations to maximize profits by entering foreign markets.

"Globalization" emerged as a buzzword in the 1990s, just as "interdependence" did in the 1970s, but the phenomena it refers to are not entirely new. Our characterization of interdependence more than 20 years ago now applies to globalization at the turn of the millennium: "This vague phrase expresses a poorly understood but widespread feeling that the very nature of world politics is changing. Like all popular concepts meant to cover a variety of phenomena, both "interdependence" and "*globalization*" have many meanings. To understand what people are talking about when they use the terms and to make them useful for analysis, we must begin by asking whether interdependence and globalization are simply two words for the same thing, or whether there is something new going on.

Globalization of media is probably most pervasive at the level of media industry models---ways of organizing and creating media. The world is becoming a much more integrated market based in capitalist or marketplace economics. This expert's pressure on nations to make media more commercial, supported by advertising, aimed on consumers and to privatize telecommunications companies that formerly were government owned. The resulting rapid changes have had a profound impact well beyond that immediate rating of Friends or the Simpson's. As we shall see, most countries produce increasing amounts of their own televisions, music and magazines. But if they produce them by drawing on U.S., British, or Japanese models and genre ideas, then those "national" media products are still at least somewhat globalize. And even if a national soap opera reflects largely local culture in its plot and characters, it still helps Colgate-Palmolive and other firms sell soap in yet another part of the global market. Roland Robertson (1995) calls such combination global---local productions done with global forms and ideas.

Global instructions and companies also have major impact. Global standard bodies such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) allocate satellite orbits, determine broadcast frequencies, and define the standards for telephones, mobile phones, faxes, and Internet connections. Global telecom companies, like Cable and Wireless, run much of the world's communications infrastructure of optical fiber cables, satellite, and high-speed lines. Global media also force competitors to react to them. When Murdoch's Star TV started broadcasting in India, the state television broadcast had to respond with more competitive entertainment or lose its audience (Straubhaar & LaRose, 2004).

The other major aspect of globalization is the increasingly worldwide penetration of media technology. Almost all nations now have at least a few people using the Internet and satellite television. While the world's richest and best educated now use such new media, most of the people in the world are just now seeing television for the first time, a new medium with high impact for many of them

2. Measuring Globalization

Globalization..has largely been driven by the interests and needs of the developed world (Grieco and Holmes, 1999). This is not unconnected with the fact that world developments have been increasingly characterized not by their growth dynamics but by their links to the process of globalization. Hence, the overwhelming character of globalization has made it compelling for some scholars to use various aspects of the global economy as units of analysis (Woods, 1988, Tussie, 1994, Cerry, 1994, Krugman and Venables 1995, Tebin and Estabrooks, 1995, Biersteker, 1998, De Vet, 1993, Kahler, 1993; Dunning, 1998; Obadina, 1998, Madungu 1999, Colle, 2000, Oluabunwa, 1999, Otokhine, 2000).

Looking specifically at economic globalization, it can be measured in different ways. These centre on the four main economic flows that characterize globalization:

Goods and services, e.g. exports plus imports as a proportion of national income or per capita of population

Labor/people, e.g. net migration rates; inward or outward migration flows, weighted by population

Capital, e.g. inward or outward direct investment as a proportion of national income or per head of population

Technology, e.g. international research & development flows; proportion of populations (and rates of change thereof) using particular inventions (especially 'factor-neutral' technological advances such as the telephone, motorcar, broadband)

Geographical Proximity

Although geographical closeness or cultural proximity helps media cross borders, language and culture seem more important than geography, as the example of Europe shows. It seems that people there and elsewhere tend to look for television programming, Internet, sites, and music that are culturally proximate. Cultural proximity is the desire for cultural products as similar as possible to one's own language, culture, history, and values. Thus, even though people often like the cosmopolitan appeal of European and American television, movies, and music, they tend to choose media from their own culture or one very similar. When AOL enters a market like Brazil to sell Internet access and content, it has a hard time competing with the culturally relevant content provided by UOL (Universe On-line), operated by a major Brazilian newspaper and magazine publishers.

Language is a crucial divider of media markets. Increasingly, trade in television, between countries is shaped by language (Wildman & Siwek, 1988), and language seems to be shaping music and Internet patterns as well. Language provides a strong natural barrier to media imports. The United States is a prime example. Most of what little imported television and film Americans watch comes from Great Britain, New Zealand, or Australia, culturally similar English-speaking countries. Likewise, while British pop music is widely accepted, other musicians such as Icelander Bjork have to sing in English to break into the U.S. market.

Besides language, other aspects of culture and important in defining audiences: jokes, slang, historical and political references, gossip about stars, and remarks about current people and events are often culture-and even nation-specific. Such cues, where they are shared across borders, can help build cross-national markets. For instances, Latin American countries used to import American situation comedies. Now they tend to import comedy shows from each other, because the cultural proximity of Spanish-speaking Latin American nations makes slang, jokes, and references to current events easier to understand. This is also true for U.S. Spanish-speaking audiences, who often prefer Mexican shows to Hollywood, since Mexican (or Colombian or Venezuelan) shows feel more familiar to many of them www.ihr.com.

However many producers have discovered that when they make too many references to current politics, use too much slang, or otherwise focus too narrowly on current local issues, their programs are less well received in other parts of the world. For example, the Simpsons are animated in South Korea but the Korean animators complain that they don't get the jokes. Hollywood has long experienced this dilemma. Sometimes a very popular sitcom, such as Seinfeld, is too United States--- specific to export broadly in the global market, whereas Baywatch, featuring action and sex appeal, does better abroad, even after the U.S. market tries of it. While cultural proximity is a strong factor, audiences in many countries respond very well to some kinds of imported programs. Those whose emphasis is on action, sex, and violence, cross cultural boundaries fairly easily. Among the few foreign, non-English-speaking film and television genres to be hits in the United States are violent action films from Hong Kong and cartoons from Japan, which are often sexy and violent. Sports are another genre with nearly universal appeal. We will also see that some elements of pop music are globalizes, while others are localized, another example that complicates the logic of cultural proximity. www.ihr.com.

In many cases, cultural-linguistic markets are emerging at a level smaller than global but larger than national. These markets based on common languages and common cultures than span borders. Just as the United States grew beyond its own market to export globally, a number of companies have grown beyond their original national markets to serve this cultural-linguistic world. Mexico, Brazil,

and Venezuela dominate much of the intra-Latin American trade in film, television, and music. Similarly, Hong Kong originally dominated much of the Asian market for material arts and gangster films and television, and for pop music.

3. The Global Media

Twenty years ago people talked about Americanization of media in the world. Today people talk more about globalization because it is apparent that although American media play a prominent role in the global scene, media industries from a number of other countries are also heavily across the world. A handful of firms dominate the globalize part of the media system. The six largest are AOL, Time Warner (U.S.), Disney (U.S.), Vivendi-Universal (French), Bertelsmann (German), Viacom (U.S.), and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (Australian). The other four main global firms are AT&T (U.S.), Microsoft (U.S.), and two media groups that are part of much large industrial corporations: General Electric/NBC (U.S.) and Sony/Columbia/ TriStar (Japanese) (Variety, 2002). Of the top 10 global media firms, then, six are American (counting News Corporations as Australian), mostly produce, distribute, and regulate almost all media outlets. These types of companies were growing and globalizing quickly. Time Warner and Disney generated around 15 percent of their income outside of the United States in 1900, a figure that rose to 30-35 percent by 2002.

Behind the top global firms is a second tier of three of four dozen media firms that do between \$1 billion and \$8 billion yearly media-related business. These firms tend to have national or cultural-linguistic stronghold or to specialize in specific global niches, as the BBC specializes in news. About half are American (Gannet, Advanced, and Comcast). Most of the rest come from Europe (Hachette, Havas, EMI, Reuters, BBC) or Canada, and a handful are based in East Asia (NHK, TVB, Fuji, Asahi, Chinese, Central TV) and Latin America (TV Globo, Televisa, Clarin/Argentina).

Some media industries such as the Hollywood films and TV studios represented by the Motion Picture Association of America have long been global in their operation and scope. They control a number of companies in other that distributed and exhibited (in theaters) the films that they produced in the United States. More recently, the owner of Hollywood itself has become globalize, as we have seen. The resulting operation has been scrutinized by critics to see whether the kinds of films produced by Sony will now reflect Japanese rather than American sensibilities. No real change has been found (Griffin, & Masters, 1997). Universal studios were sold to, Vivendi of France, which also had trouble absorbing it, leading to a major internal conflict in 2002 within Vivendi over how far to globalize.

Record companies are similarly structures except that they have a more diverse set of origins and an even more international ownership. Major recording companies are based in Great Britain (Thorn), the Netherlands (Philips), Germany (Bertelsmann-BMG), and Japan (Sony). These companies have consolidated across borders. Philips now own Polygram (formerly of the United Kingdom), and Vivendi-Universal now owns RCA (formerly of the United States), and Vivendi-Universal now owns MCA (formerly of Matsushita-Japan, originally U.U.), and AOL Time Warner owns EMI (formerly of Great Britain). Most of these companies also have large foreign branches that often produce and distribute records within other markets as well as distribute American and European music. As record companies have also been acquired by multinational companies, these firms have become more global and less national in characters. Still, there are some important distinctions in the ways that various media are organized around the world. www.ihr.com.

3.1. Cable and Satellite TV

Cable and satellite TV, which has been familiar to most Americans, Canadians, and some Europeans for years, is now expanding in most other countries of the world. Direct Broadcasting Satellite (DBS) or Direct-to-Home (DTH) started in Japan and Britain and has readily spread to many other countries, often spanning the borders of neighboring countries. By the 1990s, cable systems and the private satellite TV channels to feed them were blossoming in Europe, Latin American, and Asia. These cables

systems delivered what is for the most part a one-way expansion of new video channels, especially U.S. cable channels into these new markets. A number of channels quickly became global in reach: CNN, MTV, HBO, ESPN, TNT, Nickelodeon, the Cartoon Network, Discovery, Disney, and others began to delimit their existing channels in these countries or even to translate and adopt their U.S. channels to the languages and cultures of the new audiences (Straubhaar & LaRose, 2004).

A number of cable channel and DBS services started with a more specific language or regional target. Some European channels focus on news, music, sport, films, children's shows, and other targeted programming. One satellite television service in Asia, Star TV owned by Rupert Murdoch, originally targeted the whole of Asia with American (MTV, film), European (BBC, sports), and Chinese-language channels. It has since begun to target more specific markets such as India, Taiwan, China, South Asia, Indonesia and Japan, with more localized programming, such as its own adoptions of the music video format and more language-specific programs.

Satellite TV and cable television are beginning to expand in Latin America and the Middle East. Again channels exported from industrialized nations (CNN, BBC, MTV, and so on) are popular, but several nations (Brazil, Hong Kong, Egypt, Mexico, Saudi Arabia) are developing their own satellite television channels aimed both at national audiences and neighbors within the same cultural-linguistic markets. For example, the Qatar Channel Al Jazeera has aimed to provide regional news to the Middle Eastern regional market of Arabic speakers. By covering the U.S. war against Iraq in a way that gave considerable coverage to Iraqi civilian casualties as well as providing pro-Palestinian coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Al Jazeera has won many viewers in the region, as well as conflict with Western governments, who found that they have little leverage over it. Other countries began to use Al Jazeera footage as a news source.

Some other countries moved into fully digital television and cable TV before the United States. Japan and some European countries were operating broadcast digital TV each in 1998, and British Sky Broadcasting in Great Britain, owned by Murdoch, initiated 140 channels of fully digital TV in 1998. Like the latest cable systems in the United States, some systems in both developed and developing countries are beginning to offer two-way information services. For instance, the government of Singapore has offered broadband information services to almost all residents for several years.

4. From Cultural imperialism to Global Capitalism and Media Imperialism

- Major forces leading to cultural globalization are economic and organizational. Cultural globalization requires an organizational infrastructure. One form of globalization occurs as a result of the activities in advanced countries of news and entertainment media that produce films, television programmes, and popular music and distribute them to countries all over the world.
- Dominance of a particular country in the global media marketplace is more a function of economic than cultural factors. A small number of media conglomerates, based in a few Western countries, dominate the production and global distribution of film, television, popular music, and book publishing.

5. Cultural Imperialism and Political Economy

Among the main issues in globalization of communications media are transborder data flow, cultural imperialism, media and information flows, and the flow of information, media trade, and effects of national development. In the 1980s and 1990s, media imperialism thesis is turned under sustained attack. The notion of one-way flow of communication and influence from the West was challenged by the counter-argument that global flows are 'multi-directional.' The simple image of Western domination obscures the complex and reciprocal nature of interaction over centuries between different and increasingly hybridized western and eastern cultures. Similarly Giddens (1999a), among others,

points to 'reverse colonization,' exemplified by the export of Brazilian television programs to Portugal and the Hispanicization of South California. More generally, it is argued, global media enterprise has been forced to adapt to local cultures, and link up with local partners, in order to sustain their expansion.

As (Straubhaar and LaRose (2004) point out, "perhaps the most telling exposition of this 'multidirectional' argument comes from Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham (1996) who show that it is simplistic to imagine that here is a single global television program market dominated by the United States. Rather, there is a multiple global and expanding regional markets organized primarily around different language-based publics. These are served by growing centers of television production in Mexico, Brazil, India, Egypt, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. It is also claimed that, while there is global cultural diversity, it is structured by an under-lying hegemonic dynamic. The dominant strain of global popular culture remains centered in the West and it always Speaks English. While adapting to cultural differences, 'it wants to recognize and absorb those differences within the larger, overarching framework of what is essentially an American conception of the world.'"

Perhaps the biggest intentional issue in communication has been what many nations call cultural imperialism, the unequal flows of film, television, music, news, and information. This unbalanced flow bothers many nations on several levels. First, it is seen as a cause of cultural erosion and change. So many media products and cultural influences flow into some countries from the United States that traditionalists fear American ideas, images, and values will replace their own. Some of the fears seem trivial to U.S. observers, as when French authorities fought to keep American words such as "drugstore" and "weekend" from creeping into common use by French people. However, some consequences of media flow can be deadly serious. Some poor countries in Africa epidemics of infant diarrhea and death when mothers gave up breast-feeding for bottle-feeding, which they had seen in European and American television programs and advertising ((Wood, 1998; Straubhaar & LaRose, 2004).

Other critics have been more concerned about the economics underlying the flows of media. Underlying the fear of commercial media, in particular, is the idea that they tend to tie countries into a global economy based on advertising and consumption, which offers the proper countries little and may alienate those in the population who are frustrated by exposure to goods they cannot have. The cultural imperialism argument has lost some of its force as many countries increase the amount and kinds of media contents they produce. Some governments, such as Japan and Taiwan, have pressured national television broadcasters to produce more programming. Others, such as France, subsidize their national film industries to keep them strong. Another solution is to limit media imports, such as the amount and regional television and music production tend to increase more or less naturally, because they are feasible economically and because audiences want them.

6. Theoretical Models of Cultural Globalization

Cultural imperialism theory: This theory argues that the global economic system is dominated by a core of advanced countries while Third World countries remain at the periphery of the system with little control over their economic and political development.

Multinational or trans-national corporations are key actors in this system, producing goods, controlling markets, and disseminating products, using similar techniques.

Cultural imperialism is defined as a kind of cultural domination by powerful nations over weaker nations. It is viewed as purposeful and intentional because it corresponds to the political interests of the United States and other powerful capitalist societies. The effects of this type of cultural domination, reflecting the attitudes and values of western, particularly American capitalist societies, are viewed as extremely pervasive and as leading to the homogenization of global culture, as suggested by the following comment by an Australian scholar: "The Americanization process becomes far more formidable when the fundamental concepts of a society's national identity are remodeled in the American image". Critics have argued that the term "imperialism", which can be seen as the imposition

of power from rich to poor, from powerful to weak, implies a degree of political control by powerful countries that no longer exists.

Imperialism with the concept of “globalization”, suggests “interconnection and interdependency of all global areas” happening “in a far less purposeful way”. Despite its weaknesses, cultural imperialism, reconceptualized as media imperialism, remains a useful perspective because it can be used to analyze the extent, to which some national actors have more impact than others on global culture, and therefore are shaping and reshaping cultural values, identities, and perceptions. Since the scope and influence of global cultures are rapidly expanding, these are important issues.

In contrast to cultural imperialism theory in which the source of cultural influence is Western civilization, with non-western and less developed countries viewed as being on the periphery – as the receivers of cultural influences- the cultural flows or network model offers an alternative conception of the transmission process, as influences that do not necessarily originate in the same place or flow in the same direction. Receivers may also be originators. In this model, cultural globalization corresponds to a network, which no clearly defined centre or periphery. Globalization as an aggregation of cultural flows or networks is a less coherent and unitary process than cultural imperialism and one in which cultural influences move in many different directions.

6.1. Media and Culture

Media are central to the provision of cultural or symbolic resources globally, and therefore integral to the exercise of cultural or symbolic power. Hall observed that the combination of economic, technical, social and cultural resources held by media organizations had meant that ‘quantitatively and qualitatively ... the media have established a decisive and fundamental leadership in the cultural sphere. First, there is the relationship, and the associated tension, between the aesthetic and anthropological understandings of culture. The word ‘culture’ is derived from cultivation, and was extended in Europe from the 16th to the 18th centuries from an association with crops and animal husbandry to the cultivation of the mind. By the 19th century, culture had become linked to civilization, and the idea that the development of the human mind and the advancement of a civilization could be linked through promotion of the production and distribution of great works of scholarship and art among a wider population. The second key issue in considerations about culture, and its relationship to media is the *two paradigms* of cultural studies, culturalism and structuralism.

6.2. Media and Power

One of the reasons why we consider the study of global media to be important, and a central factor in framing different theories of the media, is because we associate its international circulation with questions of *power*. Thompson has defined power as ‘the ability to act in pursuit of one’s aims and interests, the ability to intervene in the course of events and to affect their outcome.

6.3. Forms of power Resources Paradigmatic Institutions

Economic power Material and financial resources Economic institutions (e.g. commercial enterprises)
 Political power Authority Political institutions (e.g. nation-states) Coercive power Physical and armed force
 Coercive institutions (e.g. military, police, prisons)

Symbolic power Means of information and Cultural institutions (e.g. religious communication institutions, schools and universities, media industries)

6.4. Media Markets: Audiences, Advertisers, Finance and Creative Content

Media organizations operate in three markets. First, there is the *market for creative* content, or the ability to produce and/or distribute material which is sufficiently compelling to audiences, readers or users for them to exchange money and/or time for access to such content. Second, there is the *market for financial resources*, or the ability to finance their ongoing operations as well as new investments in

technology, distribution platforms, or territorial expansion of their operations. Some of these revenues can be generated internally, from profits reinvested in production and distribution activity, but funds are also generated from loans through financial institutions, equity investment (shares), and from government through subsidies, tax incentives and other means. The balance between these sources varies, on the basis of whether the media organization in question is a commercial operation that is privately owned, a publicly owned and funded organization, or a hybrid in terms of either its ownership structure or its sources of funding. This clearly raises the problems of marginalization which, according to Ake (1996), is, in reality, the dynamics of under development - the development of under development by the agents of development.

7. Media Organizations and Policy

Analysis of both media power and media markets draws attention to the nature of *media institutions*, or what occurs within the institutions that solicit, produce, manage and distribute media content. It also points to the importance of *media policy* as a system of institutionalized governance mechanisms over the structure, conduct and performance of media organizations by, for the most part, national governments. Large-scale corporate organizations came to dominate the media and related industries in the 20th century, as they did in most sectors of the economy, as there was both greater concentration of media ownership and the absorption of small-scale commercial media producers and distributors by larger corporate conglomerates.

Conclusion

This review widens our understanding of the globalization of media in terms of media organizations. It signifies the circle of ownership, media markets, advertisers and, leadership in the culture sphere because core countries dominate the culture of the periphery.

Finally we consider some policy implications of these developments. While the claim that the nation-state has been rendered increasingly irrelevant by media globalization is strongly questioned, it is at the same time noted that media globalization presents significant challenges for media and cultural policy as it has been traditionally understood, which point in the direction of creative industries development strategies and a role for the state that is increasingly 'enabling' of industry development rather than 'protective' of national identities. It considers the rise of cultural policy at the sub-national level of cities and regions, as well as the supra-national level of international trade agreements and global civil society, concluding with a discussion of the UN-sponsored World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005. Given the dominance of a First world countries and the extent to which global media culture represents a particular mix of cultural and social values that are associated with the United States and Western Europe, a truly global media culture that mingles cultural traditions and social values from many different countries has yet to develop.

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