

3

GLOBALIZATION, SUPRANATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND MEDIA

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As the 20th century entered its closing decade, the concept of globalization became ever more seen and heard as “a key idea by which we understand the transition of human society into the third millennium” (Waters, 1995, p. 1) but with ever-decreased precision of meaning. At least in the humanities disciplines and social sciences relevant to media studies, one reason for this was that globalization was more than a new concept—it marked nothing less than a fundamental shift in the scope of their paradigm, as academic disciplines adjusted their focus to look beyond their former unit of analysis, the nation-state. Previously, to talk about “a society” or “a media system” meant a more-or-less self-contained national society and its media system—American, British, Canadian, and so on. The concept of globalization was adopted as it became necessary to see each nation-state and its various systems—cultural as well as economic and political—in a world context, a new reality in which supranational institutions were having their influence in shaping national structures and processes to an extent never quite known before.

Thus, although the concept has gone on to become associated primarily in everyday discourse with the global economic and political interdependency brought about by such supranational institutions as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank, there has also developed a vigorous discourse about globalization in the sphere of

culture and media. This embraces theory, research, and public policy, as they confront the issues of identifying and understanding the structures and processes through which supranational media institutions exert their influence on national cultures and media systems, as well as the conditions under which those cultures and systems can transcend their boundaries and assert a global influence in turn.

As will be explained, these issues are not entirely new, having first arisen in the 1970s in a worldwide debate about “cultural imperialism.” However, that was very much within the context of a world structured by the cold war. In the much less dichotomized and more fluid and pluralistic “New World Order”—that is, the post-cold war era that emerged after the collapse of the communist nation-states at the turn of the 1990s—the unity and representativeness of national cultures has been called into question, especially given the large-scale movement and settlement of peoples across national borders. And at the same time, most national media systems have become more internationalized, both in their content and in their ownership and control, due largely to the liberalization of trade, the deregulation of national markets, and the inroads of foreign capital.

As well as these “real-world” developments that have made globalization so central an issue, there are certain social and cultural theorists whose work has demanded attention be given to globalization in media studies. Although some of these are theorists of globalization as such, others are more inclined to view globalization in the context of other wider or longer term historical processes—notably, the spread of modernity, or modernization, from Europe to the rest of the world. The first section of this chapter will consider some of these theorists.

◆ *Theorists of Globalization*

One of the most influential theorists of globalization has been Arjun Appadurai (1990), widely quoted for his innovative use of the suffix *-scape* to generate a series of visual metaphors to conceptualize the various “flows” of people (ethnoscapes), media (mediascapes), technology (technoscapes), capital (finanscapes), and ideas (ideoscapes) that constitute globalization. Importantly, Appadurai argues that these flows are “dis-junctive” (i.e., they operate independently of each other); for example, it is not as if technology and capital are necessarily driving the globalization of media. This marks an important departure from more traditional critical approaches to be considered below,

such as political economy and dependency theory, which have their roots in Marxism. Appadurai notes that such theorists have tended to put much more emphasis on the trend to cultural *homogenization* in the theoretical debate on globalization, particularly in the form of “Americanization.” Others—more postmodernist theorists like himself—see that trend as being much more in tension with its opposite, *heterogenization*; that is, the proliferation of cultural fusion or “hybridity,” which occurs as global influences become absorbed and adapted in a host of local settings.

Consistent with a long tradition in communication studies, which goes back to Harold Innis and the “Toronto Circle” (Tomlinson, 1999, pp. 152ff), much globalization theory emphasizes the evident

triumph over time and space that has been brought about by converging media and communication technologies in the global era. Social theorists such as Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) have drawn attention to the consequent “disembodiment” and spatial displacement of mediated social relations and behavior. These same phenomena are conceived more broadly by Appadurai (1990) and others—notably, Néstor García Canclini (1995)—as *deterritorialization*. To give one significant example, international satellite television allows people to receive daily news from their countries of origin, even when they live far away from them, so “home” retains a virtual reality (Morley, 2000).

In a more elaborate theoretical framework, such technological mediation is an instance of what Anthony Giddens (1990) calls “time-space distancing,” which, along with *disembedding* and *reflexivity*, constitute the dynamic modes through which the institutional mechanisms of modernity have become global. These mechanisms are the spread of the capitalist nation-state, especially under the auspices of the transnational corporation, and the rise of a military order and an industrial division of labor on a global scale. Communications media facilitate these processes because of the way they overcome space and time, which thus allows individuals to free themselves from physical constraints and also to see themselves in, and adapt to, a global context, regardless of where they are. Similarly, Roland Robertson (1992), another of the “high” theorists of globalization, defines it in terms of “the compression of the world” and “the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (p. 8). Unlike Giddens and the “world-systems” theorist Immanuel Wallerstein (1990), Robertson believes that globalization is a long-term process that actually predates modernity, whereas David Harvey (1989) is more a theorist of postmodernity rather than of globalization. Nevertheless, taking his cue from Marx’s idea of the “annihilation of space by time,” Harvey agrees that the

process of what he calls “time-space compression” is crucial to the social changes of our era.

The differences between these various theorists are less important in this context than their similarities. Clearly, though without discounting their disagreements, they have all identified the control of space and time as the defining abstract principle behind globalization. The media are central to this control, not only for their technological transcendence of space and time as such but also for the interconnectedness inherent in communications, especially in their capacity to give individuals access to global networks. The internet is the most obvious manifestation of this, but a more media-based example would be interactive subscription television. Manuel Castells (1996) has been particularly influential in drawing attention to this dimension with his concept of the “space of flows,” which underlies the global “network society.” Spatial location still matters, says Castells, but only in terms of the relation of a place to other locations in the patterns of global flow (whether of capital, goods, people, information, etc.). John Tomlinson (1999) sees such interconnectedness as the principal fact about globalization, calling it “complex connectivity,” but also emphasizes complexity as a defining characteristic in itself. Mike Featherstone (1995) goes further, arguing that the cultural complexity and “spatial relativization” wrought by globalization mark the transition of modernity into postmodernity.

Michael Richards and David French (1996, pp. 33–34) provide a helpful conceptual framework for thinking about globalization, dividing it into three dimensions: structural, ideological, and empirical. First, there are the stratospheric political-economic structures of supranational businesses and organizations, including not just the obvious transnational corporations but also a whole range of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Next, there is the ideological dimension of globalization, propagated by the global

media and such corporate interest groups as the World Economic Forum. Finally, there is the empirical dimension of globalization, as “a process which can be observed.” In the next section, the globalization of the media will be considered in light of the first and last of these categories. Before moving on to that, however, it is worthwhile to acknowledge some of those theorists who have helped shape the critique of globalization as an ideological phenomenon.

In a widely quoted article, Marjorie Ferguson (1992) lists a series of ideological “myths,” or self-serving beliefs about globalization, propagated by the interests that benefit from it. These include the idea that “bigger is better” (as in the case of corporate mergers) and that “more is better” (such as more television channels). Another influential critic is Doreen Massey (1994), who reminds us that there is a “power geometry” to globalization, meaning that there are winners and losers, or globalizers and the globalized. She argues that although physical location in space might now matter less, location in social hierarchies, notably class and gender, continues to be determinant. That is, globalization is a highly relative phenomenon, but the ideological discourse about it talks as if everyone on the planet is both participating in and benefiting from it. Appadurai (1990) makes much the same critical point when he says, “One man’s imagined community is another man’s political prison” (p. 295). Especially if he’s a woman.

◆ *Supranational Institutions and the Media*

Returning now to the framework set out by Richards and French (1996), this section will outline the different categories of transnational institution as they are relevant to the media and focus on the transnational or, more properly said, global media corporations. It will then refer to some particular

cases and outline the main empirical trends evident in the expansion and formation of these historically quite recent institutions.

Whereas the 19th century produced a world dominated by nation-states, the 20th century saw the advent of international institutions set up to coordinate the common interests of national governments on a world scale, such as the United Nations (UN) and its agencies. Most of these have been dedicated ostensibly to peaceful purposes and world development, even if, in reality, they have been a site of conflict between various alignments of national interests. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a classic case, and one with strong relevance to the media, as will be outlined in the next section. More significant for the recent advance of globalization in economic and political terms have been new global institutions such as the World Bank and the WTO. Both of these began under the auspices of the UN, but they have gone on to become powerful global agencies in their own right, often criticized for pursuing an agenda identified with the rich countries and the global corporations. Also found at the supranational level is a wide range of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) set up on a public interest basis to achieve developmental, health, environmental, and charitable purposes, such as the Red Cross. Included here as well are organizations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, which often confront the interests of national governments and global corporations alike.

The global corporations are privately owned institutions with their roots in large nationally based companies that became “transnational corporations,” mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, and subsequently globalized themselves. That is, they became more complexly interpenetrated with other companies and more decentralized in their operations—no longer necessarily controlled by a head office located in their country of origin and now part of a movement toward “disorganized capitalism” (Lash & Urry,

1994). Most obviously, this category includes long-established consumer goods companies whose products are made and marketed worldwide, such as Coca-Cola and Ford. Their relevance for the media is in their capacity as the advertisers from which the corporate media derive their income. They are predominantly “American” but not exclusively so: British, Dutch, and French companies, many with their origins in colonial times, are also in this category, and they have been joined more recently by Asian companies, notably Sony. Indeed, it has been Sony that explicitly developed the strategy of *glocalization*, the tailoring of global products for differentiated local markets (Robertson, 1995). In this process, the fusion of homogenization and heterogenization is finely managed so that the products appear in the marketplace without the evidence of their ultimate national provenance in Japan (Iwabuchi, 2000).

Sony is a significant case for two other reasons: First, it was Sony that brought home the reality of globalization in the United States when it acquired Columbia TriStar film and television interests and CBS Records in that country in 1989. This showed dramatically that globalization was more than just something that U.S.-based companies did to the rest of the world but that the United States itself was subject to the forces of globalization. Second, Sony exemplifies a particular kind of global corporation, a media company that enters the media field from a basis in industrial manufacturing—in its case, looking for “synergy,” or cross-stimulation, in the horizontal integration of its media “hardware” and “software” divisions. Other examples have a less direct connection between their manufacturing and media activities, such as Westinghouse’s ownership of the U.S. and global television operations of CBS Broadcasting before it merged with Viacom. Others again have had a base in financial or commercial services such as advertising: Two European examples this time are Silvio Berlusconi’s Mediaset in Italy and Havas in France (Herman & McChesney, 1997).

However, the global media companies with the greatest size, complexity, and profile have been built on the basis of the media industries themselves. The rapid growth of these entities over the closing decades of the past century needs to be understood in terms of the ideological and structural shift toward privatization and economic liberalization of trade and investment that characterized this era, as well as a range of technological developments, particularly the trend to the convergence of media with telecommunications. These factors made possible great transformations in the regulation of media industries, such as those that permitted the wide-scale privatization of the television systems of most nations of Western Europe in these decades, to take a significant example, or the advent of private ownership of international television satellites. Indeed, television is the medium that has been most transformed by globalization but also the one that is most deeply implicated in facilitating globalization as a cultural process. For that reason, television will be the medium most often referred to in the analysis presented in this chapter.

News Corporation can be regarded as an archetypical model of how the new regulatory mood and technological developments became business opportunities that could be exploited. Although News has its origins and still dominates the press in Australia, it has become a high-profile, vertically and horizontally integrated media conglomerate with a truly global character, albeit strongly identified with the person of its chair, Rupert Murdoch. It has a history of risk and debt-prone but strategic international acquisitions—first of press interests in the United Kingdom and United States and then network television in the United States and international film production and distribution based in the United States (Twentieth Century Fox), followed by the extension of its satellite television interests from the United Kingdom and Europe to all of Asia and Latin America (Herman & McChesney, 1997, pp. 70ff).

However, at the stratospheric level at which global corporations make mergers, achieve their integration and synergies, and establish their economies of scale and scope, Murdoch has complained that News Corporation is a relative “minnow.” Indeed, News ranked fifth amongst the corporations that make up the first of the two tiers into which Herman and McChesney (1997) classified the global media corporations towards the end of the 1990s, in accordance with their volume of sales. Heading that list was Time-Warner, followed by Disney, Bertelsmann (the largest European-based media corporation), and Viacom. This order still remained the same after Viacom’s merger with CBS in 1999, although Sony would be the biggest of all if total revenue (i.e., including its electronic products division) were counted (Thussu, 2000, pp. 126–127). After that, the top tier became rounded out with Universal (formerly owned by the Canadian distiller Seagram but later merged with PolyGram and the French conglomerate Vivendi); Liberty Media, following the merger of TeleCommunications, Inc. with American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T); and General Electric, owner of the leading U.S. and global television network NBC. A second tier consisted mainly of U.S. newspaper and information service companies, plus several European media groups—notably, Pearson and Reuters in the United Kingdom; Kirch in Germany; Reed Elsevier in the Netherlands; Havas, Hachette, and Canal Plus in France; Prisa in Spain; and Mediaset in Italy. However, it is significant that Televisa of Mexico, Globo of Brazil, Clarín of Argentina, and Grupo Cisneros of Venezuela were also found at this level, together with Asian companies such as TVB International of Hong Kong and the Modi Group of India (McChesney, 2000).

The presence of European, Latin American, and Asian corporations in these lists should make it clear that the biggest of them all, Time-Warner, which merged with the internet company America Online (AOL) in 2000, is not necessarily typical, in

that not all global media corporations have emanated from the United States. However, Time-Warner is very much an American affair. Even before the merger with AOL, Time-Warner’s 1996 merger with Turner Broadcasting had given it Cable News Network (CNN), the world’s leading cable news service, enabling synergies with Time-Warner’s own channels such as HBO through its cable service provision activities (Thussu, 2000). National origins apart, the kind of convergence of traditional and new communications media evident in the AOL Time-Warner merger, like the fusion of cable and telecommunications interests in the Liberty Media deal with AT&T, probably indicates the direction future agglomerations will take. The merging of cable, satellite, and internet services can be expected to intensify in the future, particularly with the technological advantages of digital television and the commercial advantages of addressable interactive subscription services on a direct-to-home basis.

◆ *From Cultural Imperialism to Global Culture*

Much of the history of international communication research, cultural critique, and policy debate over recent decades can be understood as a response to the rise of all of these types of corporations, to the structure of relations between them and their national governments, and to the social and cultural effects attributed to them. Most influentially, there has been the critical discourse of *cultural imperialism*, especially that associated with the work of Herbert Schiller and Armand Mattelart, which not only established itself as an anchoring point in communication and cultural theory but also helped to articulate the demands of the developing countries—collectively known at the time as the “Third World”—for what they called a “New World Information and Communication Order”

(NWICO). This section will focus on the debate around cultural imperialism, as it was a watershed both for the theoretical critique of the media and for the internationalization of media policy issues, played out as they were in the forum of a major supranational intergovernmental organization, UNESCO. Furthermore, echoes of this debate continue to be heard in current discourse about the phenomenon of *global culture*, to be considered further in the next section.

The issues in the debate, in one of its most systematic formulations, can be narrowed down to *media imperialism*, which ranged from the transfer of news values and journalistic training, through advertising and consumption patterns, to film and television entertainment (Boyd-Barrett, 1977). These were all seen as means by which the West (but especially the United States) could exert ideological influence on the Third World, an issue taken in the context of the cold war structure of international relations at the time. Although theorists such as Oliver Boyd-Barrett recognized the fundamental importance of the implantation of Western institutional structures and organizational models in the developing countries, the heat in the debate was generated more by the content of the media and its supposed power to determine or at least exert influence over thought and behavior. These influences were inferred from the bias inherent in international news reporting sourced from the West, or the “consumerist” values and lifestyle models discernible in television series and movies imported from the United States.

Much of the critique emanated from Western Marxist scholars interested in the political and economic functions attributable to culture and the media. This was “the dominant ideology thesis” (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1985) writ large on an international scale: the view of capitalist culture as a homogenizing ideological force, with the media as its Trojan horse. In the United States, Herbert Schiller took up the metaphor of imperialism, initially in his *Mass Communications and American*

Empire (1969), which traced out the political economy of the connections he saw between U.S. government foreign policies, the overseas activities of U.S. corporations, and the cultural role he attributed to the media in facilitating and legitimizing them. In Europe, Armand Mattelart and his collaborators became articulate and active theorists working within this same paradigm, although with an acknowledged debt to Latin American dependency theory, a much more sociologically subtle variant (Mattelart, 1980). Western empirical research provided evidence for the case—notably, large-scale comparative studies, supported by UNESCO, of television import and export patterns (Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974; Varis, 1984) and other work on the key gatekeeping role of the Western news agencies (Boyd-Barrett, 1980).

With the process of decolonization and the creation of new independent nations that had followed World War II, the UN and its agencies had soon found themselves not only split by the cold war division between capitalist and communist blocs but also having to accommodate a host of new members. For their part, these nations pursued their common interests both outside the UN, meeting as the Nonaligned Movement, and inside, as a voting bloc, sometimes called the Group of 77. It was in these forums that the concept of cultural imperialism began to figure in their debates about how to obtain a more equal status with the world powers and to achieve more autonomous economic development. The diffusion of Western models of life and cultural values through the media, secured through UNESCO’s commitment to the liberal principle of the “free flow” of information across borders, became seen as an obstacle to these objectives. Drawing explicitly on the rhetoric of cultural imperialism, these countries came to demand a “New World Information and Communication Order” as instrumental to their larger objective of a “New International Economic Order.”

Although they were successful in having a UNESCO Commission report in their

favor and in winning a vote in support of “a free and balanced flow” as UNESCO’s new principle, this was at the cost of, first, the United States, in 1985, and, a year later, the United Kingdom, withdrawing from UNESCO. These withdrawals followed acrimonious and often sham debates over several years about the freedom of the press, on one hand, versus the rights of governments to control information flows on the other. For the United States and the United Kingdom, this debate often was reduced to the ideological struggle of capitalism versus communism, but it was also about an issue on which they were outnumbered (Roach, 1997). The United Kingdom rejoined in 1997, but the United States only in 2002. The absence of two such major powers over so many years significantly weakened UNESCO because it undermined not only the organization’s legitimacy and representativeness but also its finances, given the reduced revenue base UNESCO could use without the substantial contributions of these countries. The NWICO outcome provides a limit case of how far a supranational organization, even with ostensibly benign purposes, can truly serve as a global forum, where debate is “highly circumscribed and ultimately limited by the existing distribution of global economic power” (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 16).

◆ *Global Culture: Another Layer of Complexity*

With the wisdom of hindsight, the NWICO issue now appears as a response of the world of nation-states as they adjusted to the internationalization of the media in the post-World War II era, structured, on one hand, by the inequalities between the old imperial nation-states and the new postcolonial ones and, on the other, by the dichotomous politics of the cold war. Indeed, it is not accidental that the rise of the discourse of globalization coincided with the collapse

of the latter as a structuring principle. However, so far as culture and the media were concerned, this discourse also sought to identify a number of other developments. In this light, Peter Golding (1994) has summarized the trends associated with the emergence of a global culture: firstly, the decline of the nation as a cultural force (as well as an economic and political one), relative to supranational influences; secondly, the growth of organizations and affiliations not only above the nation-state but also below it, that is, at a more local level; thirdly, the “syndicalization of experience,” in the form of globalized consumer goods; and finally, the role of dominant world languages in the diffusion of a global culture. This can serve as a useful framework here to discuss the concept of global culture.

CULTURE AND THE NATION

Setting aside for the moment the debate about the alleged decline of the nation-state as an economic and political force, the nation as a cultural force is seen to be in retreat for two reasons. Firstly, the massive increase in the movement of people across borders caused by globalization has resulted in much more culturally and linguistically pluralistic populations in each nation-state. This means that nation-states are much less culturally homogeneous than they once were, or at least believed themselves to be, and also that their diverse populations can retain much stronger ties to the culture and language of their original homeland than to the nation where they now live. Secondly, this situation has led to the concept of national culture falling into disrepute, as national culture now is criticized as the preferred culture of the dominant strata, not the nation as a whole. “Culture is a multi-layered phenomenon; the product of local, tribal, regional or national dimensions, which is anything but a single national culture” (Richards & French, 1996, p. 30). In the era of globalization, this has important theoretical implications for the traditional

concept of culture itself, rooted as it has been in terms of the “organic” way of life of a certain people fixed in a certain place. “Culture” now seems more about people on the move (Clifford, 1992), a form of adaptation to displacement and changing circumstances, and always “hybrid” rather than “pure” (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995).

Although there continue to be many different forms of population movement, ranging from that of expatriate corporate executives to asylum-seeking refugees, most discussion of the phenomenon has focused on the substantial minorities established throughout the world as a result of the great diasporas, both those of the past as well as those of the present. These include such massive dispersals of people as the historical transplantation of Africans into the Americas and then, for many, from there to Europe; the flows of Chinese into Southeast Asia and elsewhere from the late 19th century onwards; and the spread of communities of Indians into the Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East, and later to Europe and North America. These people include not just wage-earning workers and professionals but also financial and industrial capitalists who have formed institutional linkages such as the “Overseas Chinese” and the “Non-Resident Indians” (Kotkin, 1992). Karim (1998) has even suggested that these globally dispersed communal networks can be thought of as effectively a “third tier” of supranational connections, after those of the global organizations and nation-states. These diasporas form global cultural markets for news and entertainment media in their own language, “geolinguistic regions” that international satellite services can reach on a “global narrowcasting” basis, regardless of the economics of the breadth and depth of their distribution across the world (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001). This is the deterritorialization of culture of which the theorists speak: residents of a nation able to maintain cultural identifications brought from outside that nation and no longer obliged to assimilate themselves to a national culture.

At the same time, the national cultures that progressive critical theorists once sought to defend against being swamped by cultural imperialism now stand exposed as the ideological constructions through which the dominant forces in each nation-state legitimize and perpetuate their domination in terms of gender, ethnicity, and class (Tomlinson, 1991, pp. 68ff). Thus, along with movements based on gender and sexual preference, global migration has brought to the fore social differences that once were suppressed under the weight of national culture. This leads us back to the second trend identified above by Golding (1994)—that is, the disintegration of national cultural identities and social organization in favor of more heterogeneous identities, which, although local in character, are able to communicate with their counterparts in other countries. Nation-states are thus said to be losing their cultural authority over their own populations at the same time as their economic and political sovereignty is being compromised by pressures from the supranational level (Papastergiadis, 2000, pp. 76ff).

CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION

Of more immediate relevance to the media is what Golding (1994) calls the “syndicalization of experience.” This can be taken to mean the spread of globally branded consumer goods around the world and, by extension, a whole modern culture of consumption and the commercial popular culture that is integral to it. Just as cultural imperialism theorists once railed against the “export of consumerism” (Schiller, 1979, p. 24) and “cultural synchronization” (Hamelink, 1983), globalization theorists have conceived of a “global culture” but with the important difference that they do not fear global culture as an irresistible force of homogenization. Nevertheless, the concept of cultural imperialism is like the return of the repressed in Freud or the unwelcome party guest thrown out of

the front door, only to sneak around and come in the back. That is, despite more than a decade of criticism, some of the assumptions behind cultural imperialism get smuggled back into the debate around global culture.

Cultural imperialism and its related discourses became discredited for a number of reasons (Tomlinson, 1991). It ascribed an irresistible omnipotence to external powers and their cultural influence, without taking account of either the empirical impact of that supposed influence on the populations of the countries believed to be affected or the way that such influence actually might be sought after and mediated by social strata in those countries themselves. In other words, it tended to equate economic power with cultural effects, interpreting the undeniable presence of foreign cultural products as self-evident “proof” of their influence. Ironically, this only reinforced the myth of an all-powerful United States, particularly when it was argued that the U.S. government and its corporations, for both ideological and commercial reasons, were deliberately seeking to obtain such influence.

Furthermore, cultural imperialism theory assumed not only that media audiences in the affected countries would absorb the same ideological meanings in the same way as just so many “cultural dupes” but that the alien messages would drive out whatever previous values, beliefs, and worldviews were held by these people. Finally, there was the “anthropological melancholy” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 109) with which the cultures of the subjected countries were regarded. Like the 19th-century myth of the “noble savage,” Third World national cultures were reified and romanticized as authentic, pristine, and fragile. Cultural imperialism critics sought to keep them that way by defending them, whether they liked it or not, against the corrupting influence of modernization from the United States in particular and the West in general.

Although there is always the danger of backsliding into these assumptions and the

ad absurdum positions they lead to, the best formulations of global culture—or, better said, the globalization of culture—have tried to stake out more secure ground for themselves. In contrast to the simple dualistic worldview of cultural imperialism, Tomlinson (1999) urges that the complexity of globalization be grasped as a first principle: “Lose the complexity and you have lost the phenomenon” (p. 14). Similarly, in contrast to cultural imperialism theory’s ultimately comforting belief in cultural influence as a deliberate strategy, for whom there is someone to blame, globalization theory makes an existential leap to the view that no one is in control. Tomlinson (1997, p. 189) cites Giddens’s metaphor of the Hindu “juggernaut,” an unstoppable but unwieldy idol-bearing cart, quite capable of crushing its devotees.

MULTIPLE LEVELS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Instead of the homogeneous mass of victims conceived of by cultural imperialism theory, or even the integrated, rational individual of modern Western thought, it is the deterritorialized, decentered subject of postmodernism that now best enables us to confront the globalization of culture as the complex, out-of-control process that it is. Postmodern theory’s conception of the individual subject as composed not of one single and relatively constant identity but, rather, of multiple identities that become mobilized within different cultural discourses is consistent with understanding cultural identity in a world where people are on the move, where there are cultural affiliations at various levels, and in which the cultural ties of nationhood are becoming ever less credible and binding.

Stuart Hall (1992) argues that now people are more inclined to assert their various identities at the same levels as we saw were described by Golding (1994)—that is, “below” the nation, such as the province or neighborhood, and also “above” it, on

the scale of what Hall calls the “global post-modern.” He means by this the way in which the flows of goods, services, and media messages across borders facilitate global consumption. This is exemplified as much by the proliferation of Indian restaurants in the United Kingdom as it is by young Asians wearing jeans (Hall, 1992, pp. 302–303). The resultant implosion of older notions of traditional and modern, East and West, produces cultural fusions that are viewed as incongruous by academics in the West, what might be called the “Thai boxing by Moroccan girls in Amsterdam” syndrome (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, p. 53). The point is that the globalization of culture presents people with a *mélange* of cultural and consumption choices that they never had when their cultural imagining was defined by the limits of their national media system and, furthermore, leaves them with very few rules as to how their choices might be combined. In this sense, a postmodern *decollecting*, or the selective disembedding of cultural goods from their traditional context, is the counterpart of deterritorialization (García Canclini, 1995, pp. 223–228).

The idea that people can have more than one cultural identity at the same time or, rather, cultural affiliations existing at different levels might seem commonsensical now, but it took postmodernism’s challenge to the “dominant ideology thesis” in the 1990s before this could begin to be theorized in the context of the globalization of culture. Of equal importance was the recognition that the process of globalization was also one of regionalization and that the regions concerned existed both above and below the nation-state or at both macro and micro levels. Thus, a person was, for example, Welsh, Catalan, or Bavarian at the same time as he or she was, respectively, British, Spanish, and German, as well as, of course, European. The several crisscrossing levels of structural organization fostered by globalization could thus be seen to correspond to cultural identifications: transnational (or global), international,

macro-regional, national, micro-regional, municipal, and local (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, p. 50). These multiple levels were usefully applied to the analysis of the globalization of television in particular, with the important addition, to be returned to below, of geolinguistic region (Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996; Straubhaar, 1997).

They also have the advantage of treating the local as a level in its own right in the whole global-local dialectic, rather than constantly conflating local with national culture (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991).

Above all, by thinking of the production, circulation, and consumption of cultural products as occurring at the interlocking series of levels just described, with cultural identities corresponding to each level, we are able to put the concept of global culture into a more credible perspective. Rather than a universal force for homogenization, global culture becomes, rather, one more level at which certain kinds of cultural forms can circulate around the planet. For example, Boyd-Barrett (1997, p. 15) refers to the “global popular,” meaning a globally marketed cultural product of a certain kind, such as a blockbuster movie from Hollywood like *Titanic* or the global release of the latest CD from Madonna. These products receive maximum publicity and marketing support on a global scale and are distributed through complex hierarchies of channels, ensuring the products reach local cinemas and stores in almost in the same way that Coca-Cola is brought to some of the remotest villages of the world. Yet it is crucial to appreciate that although this material might assert its own level of cultural influence, there is no reason to believe that it thereby drives out other identities, especially those based on ethnicity and religion. Cultural identity is not a zero-sum game. As Marjorie Ferguson (1993, p. 4) once rather understatedly observed, global commercial popular culture—“jeans, theme parks, fast food, CNN”—is a “surface” phenomenon, which does not reduce the “deep” realities of cultural difference but just adds “another layer of complexity”

to understanding the process of identity formation.

Between the global popular and the national levels of cultural production and consumption are the international and the macro-regional. For the purposes of this analysis, the international can be thought of as culturally connected, whereas the macro-regional refers more to physically and politically connected space. Thus, American and English television programs are seen in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (and, to a very small extent, vice versa) because of the colonial and ethnocultural relationships between those markets and the common language that they share, whereas the countries of Europe form a common market for television only on the basis of the European Union as an economic and political entity, despite linguistic and cultural differences.

To take another example, to watch a Brazilian *telenovela* in Portugal is international, but to watch a game show from elsewhere in Europe is macro-regional. We shall see that this distinction easily collapses into the concept of geolinguistic region, but it is useful to the extent that it takes account of cultural and linguistic similarities and differences as “market forces” in the international trade in media goods and services. It is in this context that Joseph Straubhaar (2000) identifies “cultural proximity” as a factor facilitating such exchange, as in the former example just given, whereas Colin Hoskins and his colleagues see how a “cultural discount” can hamper it (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988; Hoskins, McFadyen, & Finn, 1998), as in the latter. That is, cultural and linguistic similarities are often more decisive than geographical location and physical distance in forming international markets for cultural products. This is particularly true of television in the age of the transnational satellite, which not only can distribute signals across whole world regions, without regard to national borders, but actually transforms the export trade in television from being about the sale of rights to broadcast individual programs to

the sale of programming packaged into channels offered as continuous services.

It is the national, micro-regional, and more local levels that are the ones seen to be vulnerable to being swamped by global media. Clearly, there are vast differences in how nations are placed with regard to this problem. As noted, many national media systems are facing a crisis of legitimacy as far as their role in fostering national culture is concerned, particularly in the case of national broadcasters. Similarly, national cinema industries, where they exist, struggle to maintain themselves in the face of the massive competitive advantages of Hollywood. On the other hand, it is at the micro-regional and local levels below the nation that some of the most inventive cultural hybridization or “creolization” is taking place and the greatest resistance to globalization is found. Carlos Monsiváis’s (1994) anecdotes are emblematic here, such as the Mexican villagers who included Freddy Kruger from *Friday the 13th* and other movie characters in their Easter parade.

As far as television in particular is concerned, it appears that passing through an initial stage of foreign dependence to a maturity of the national market is, if not universal, then certainly a common pattern. Crucial in this transition is the growth of not just the national audience size but also domestic program production. Now that many countries have had almost 50 years of television, the evidence indicates that audiences come to prefer television programming from their own country and in their own vernacular or, if that is not available, from other countries that are culturally and linguistically similar (Straubhaar, 1997). This is most significant in light of the fact that it was the apparent domination of television by foreign content that inspired much of the cultural imperialism debate. On the other hand, it should also be said that there is a marked tendency to stratification in television, particularly in those regions that have digital, direct-to-home (DTH) subscription services. Such services carry global content, for those with a taste

and the money for it, whereas national and local terrestrial free-to-air television services are much more in tune with popular culture at those levels (Sinclair, 1999, pp. 166ff).

GEOLINGUISTIC REGIONS

As we have seen, a geolinguistic region is defined not necessarily by its geographical contours but more in a virtual sense, by commonalities of language and culture. Most characteristically, these have been established on the basis of the world languages propagated by historical relationships of colonization, as has been the case with English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French. However, in the age of international satellites, geolinguistic regions have also come to include perhaps quite small but, more significantly, remote and dispersed pockets of users of particular languages on a global scale. This is most often where there have been great diasporic population flows out of their original countries, such as the Chinese and Indians noted earlier. In other cases, geographical proximity still matters, such as the unique case of the Spanish-speaking minorities of diverse origin who inhabit the United States, who are integrated in particular ways with the larger geolinguistic media markets of Latin America.

At the cultural level, these regions can be thought of, to some extent, as a globalized equivalent of what Benedict Anderson (1991) famously called the “imagined community” of the nation, that is, where a common print culture and language provided an inclusive sense of belonging. In their economic dimension, they can be understood in terms of what the classical economists called “comparative advantage,” now more often referred to as “competitive advantage.” Hoskins and McFadyen (1991) use this concept to explain the traditional dominance of the United States in media production. In addition to the “first mover” advantages accruing from the exploitation of new technologies as they become available, U.S. producers enjoy economies of

scale and scope attributable to their “unique access to the largest market” (Hoskins & McFadyen, 1991, pp. 209–212)—that is, to the largest English-speaking nation in a world in which English is “the language of advantage,” with the English-speaking world being the largest and richest world-language community (Collins, 1990, p. 211). English has the further advantage of being the world’s most widely spoken second language (Crystal, 1997), which is both an effect and a cause of the preeminence of the United States in the world’s audiovisual trade.

Although language is an obvious although taken-for-granted element in the globalization of media markets in the English-speaking world, it is instructive to see how significant it is in similar ways in other geolinguistic regions, at least in the case of television. Thus, the major television corporations of Mexico and Brazil dominate the program export trade in the Spanish and Portuguese geolinguistic regions because their home markets are the largest in those respective regions (Sinclair, 1999). “Greater China” forms the world’s largest geolinguistic region, in which programs are traded between the People’s Republic of China (Mainland) and the Republic of China (Taiwan), despite their political differences (Man Chan, 1996), and Hong Kong remains a major center for all kinds of audiovisual production and distribution, serving the Chinese diaspora as well. In addition to exporting television programs and packaged cultural products such as videos, both the state-owned China Central Television and the private TVB International transmit satellite services available to millions of Chinese around the world (Sinclair, Yue, Hawkins, Kee Pookong, & Fox, 2001). For the Arabic-speaking world, the main equivalent service is the London-based Middle East Broadcasting Centre, while Al-Jazeera, based in Qatar, specializes in independent news for the region (Thussu, 2000, pp. 208–212).

India also has both state (Doordarshan) and private (Zee) international satellite

services for its diaspora but provides an interesting case in which the liberalization of television has meant a boost for “local” languages, emerging from their former suppression by a dominant national language. Despite fears of “cultural invasion,” which greeted the advent of Star TV and CNN at the beginning of the 1990s, by the end of the decade, it was Indian satellite-to-cable channels that had secured the allegiance of the audiences. Most striking has been the proliferation of dozens of channels in the regional languages. These are languages with tens of millions of speakers, such as Tamil and Bengali, quite large enough to commercially sustain more than one channel in that language. Thus, it is the massive size of these geolinguistic micro-regions, larger than many nations, that allows them to escape the dull compulsion of media economics that usually militates against broadcasting in minority languages and so favors world languages. Yet, also most significant in the Indian case is the fact that these channels allow the speakers of those languages to escape the former hegemony of Hindi, which undermines the traditional “nation-building” role of television in India and instead fosters a degree of cultural pluralism that the nation-state would never have wanted (Sinclair & Harrison, 2000).

◆ *Globalization, Regionalization, and Cultural Trade*

Referring to the whole debate about the impact of homogenizing and heterogenizing global forces on culture, Ferguson (1993) declares,

For national cultural policy-makers and film and TV producers, such seemingly arcane issues translate into pragmatic questions of market access, industry control, product demand and supply, where relevant legal and commercial questions are those of copyright law,

import regulation, foreign ownership, product support and audience preference. At the level of bi-lateral and multi-lateral trade negotiation . . . McLuhan’s global village vision dissolves into hard bargaining about who wins and who loses from cultural trade deals. (p. 7)

A focus on the regional tendencies within globalization not only helps to make the processes involved more comprehensible but also identifies further kinds of supranational organization that have a bearing on the media industries—namely, regional trading blocs and international trade organizations. The paradigm case of how trade agreements can consolidate regions and produce a new level of governance beyond the nation-state is the European Union (EU), for that has now evolved into a unique “politico-communicative” entity, much more than a trading bloc (Schlesinger, 1999). In the Americas, the significant agreements are the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), based on the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and Mercosur, in the cone of Latin America. In Asia and the Pacific Rim, there is the much looser organization for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Each of these exists, although to a highly variable extent, to foster free trade on a regional basis, and that includes the removal of protection for national media industries.

At the global level, a series of rounds of international negotiations under the auspices of the UN General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) culminated in agreements in 1995 that set up the WTO and committed signatories to the liberalization of trade in services. Although the agreements did not include the media as such, they were very much concerned with telecommunications. Given the considerable degree to which media and telecommunications are converging, for example, in satellite and cable television, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of 1995 does therefore have an indirect interest

in the media trade, whereas the WTO is committed to the eventual removal of trade barriers across all sectors.

Even before the establishment of the WTO, the two organizations in charge of the international coordination of telecommunications services—the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and INTELSAT, the satellite agency—underwent measures that strengthened private ownership in them and diminished their public service responsibilities. They became committed to the pursuit of open markets in telecommunications (Thussu, 2000, pp. 84ff). This is very much to the benefit of the global media corporations that have a vested interest in free trade. At around the same time, the United States was putting direct pressure on the many nations of the world, including Canada and Australia, which have various policies—subsidies, screen quotas, import levies, and the like—to bolster their national cultural industries against market dominance by high-quality but low-cost media products and services from countries with comparative advantages in media trade, which overwhelmingly in practice means the United States.

The United States refuses to accept that these countries might have these schemes as a means of protecting cultural identity, saying that that is merely a cloak for economic protectionism. However, although the “free-flow” principle is now truly back on the international agenda, this time in the WTO rather than UNESCO, several of the countries involved have resisted tenaciously. Indeed, France’s leadership of European dissent on this issue almost upset the conclusion of the GATT in 1994. As well as having various protective measures for its national media industries, France at one stage was seeking to lead Southern European and Latin American countries in the cultivation of a “Latin audiovisual space” to counteract that of the English-speaking world. France, of course, is the center of its own geolinguistic media empire, based on the French colonial system that once extended from Africa to

Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean (Mattelart, Delcourt, & Mattelart, 1984).

For its part, Europe introduced a “Television Without Frontiers” directive in 1989, aimed at not only coordinating regulation throughout the EU but also fostering EU and national production within member states. Although the scheme is not very effective, the EU continues to hold its ground, at least with the rhetoric of the cultural identity issue (Thussu, 2000, pp. 179–180). Given the ideological tide towards free trade and the complexities of convergence, together with the fact that for most countries, their audiovisual industries are not as important to them as that sector is to the United States, it is possible that protection in the media sector ultimately will be traded off to achieve trade liberalization across the other sectors where they want it to happen.

◆ *Conclusion*

For all the apparent inevitability of globalization—the rise to power of the global corporations, the fluid movement of media and people across borders, the drive to free trade—the supranational institutions have not yet overtaken the nation-state. It remains the effective unit of economic, political, and sociocultural authority in the world, even if it now finds itself in constant struggle with the supranational institutions above it, as well as a plurality of social and cultural differences that have opened up below it. Although there undoubtedly has been a relative loss of its sovereignty and legitimacy as an institution over the past century, like Mark Twain, the nation-state is still here to say that rumors of its death have been greatly exaggerated.

The nation-state has a unique role in mediating globalization—directly or indirectly, supranational institutions still must deal with, or through, nation-states. Clearly, there are demonstrable differences

in the wealth, strength, and prestige of actual nation-states, as well as in their receptiveness towards globalization. So far, only the authoritarian nations have been able to define the terms on which the global media corporations have entered their markets (Sinclair, 1998). The challenge for democratic nation-states is to find the political will to call the bluff of globalizing corporate interests, to shape relations with them for the benefit of the people the state ostensibly represents, and to selectively divert and filter the incoming flows of global culture.

Without denying the cosmopolitan freedoms that globalization can bring for many, the nation-state can and must do more than just watch while its citizens form themselves into consumers of all the kinds of global products and services now in circulation, from the blockbuster to the narrowcast. At its own level and below, the nation-state has to show itself willing to relinquish its claim as arbiter of an exclusive national culture and instead foster social and cultural pluralism within the population, as well as defend the public good within its mediasphere. These efforts should include the extension of citizenship, without making it conditional upon cultural background and affiliation, and the provision of active support for media industries at the national, micro-regional, and more local levels that depend on it. These steps will take the nation-state beyond the epoch that formed it and ensure that it fulfills its responsibilities in mediating globalization rather than throwing itself under the juggernaut's wheels.

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