

10. Everett Rogers, *Modernization among Peasants: The Impact of Communication*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969, pp. 8–9.
11. *World Development Report 1998–99: Knowledge for Development*, New York: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 1998.
12. Kevin Danaher, *10 Reasons to Abolish the IMF and World Bank*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001.
13. See, e.g., Doug Badow and Ian Vasques (eds.), *Perpetuating Poverty: The World Bank, the IMF, and the Developing World*, Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 1994, which dissects the role of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in promoting the politicization of economic life, inhibiting private enterprise, and delaying the emergence from poverty. The contributors argue that because of the nature of their structure, the World Bank and the IMF cannot change pro-market policies (p. 362). See also Danaher, *10 Reasons to Abolish the IMF and World Bank*.
14. Ilan Kapoor, "Participatory Development, Complicity and Desire," *Third World Quarterly* 26 (2005), 1203. Kapoor also expands on his criticism in *The Postcolonial Politics of Development*, New York: Routledge, 2008.
15. Paul Lazarsfeld, "Remarks on Administrative and Critical Communication Research," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9 (1941), 2–16.
16. Two of the most notable exceptions are Kyungmo Kim and George Barnett, "The Determinants of International News Flows: A Network Analysis," *Communication Research* 23(3) (June 1996), 323–52, and Jianguo Zhu, "Comparing the Effects of Mass Media and Telecommunications on Economic Development: A Pooling Time Series Analysis," *Gazette* 57 (1996), 17–28.
17. Melvin Defleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication*, New York: Longman, 1975.
18. Herbert Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*, White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976, p. 3.
19. Some scholars see this substantial body of literature as being overly representative of the body of knowledge in international communication. One critic refers to this aspect in the following way: "The root of the problem is that the research paradigm of the field of international communication is dominantly critical" (Michael G. Elasmr, "Opportunities and Challenges of Using Meta-Analysis in the Field of International Communication," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 16(3) (September 1999), 382). After applying a meta-analysis, the author claimed that the majority of writers used polemics rather than empirical evidence to support their conclusions. Many of the pieces are authored by academics in the semiperipheral and peripheral regions. In the same article, Elasmr also called for the utilization of more meta-analysis in order to move the field of international communication to a higher plane.
20. Robert Stevenson, *Global Communication in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Longman, 1994, p. 13.
21. Luis Beltran, "Alien Premises, Objects and Methods in Latin American Communication Research," *Communication Research* 3 (1976), 107–34.
22. Majid Tehranian, "Foreword," in Y. Kamalipour (ed.), *Images of the US around the World: A Multicultural Perspective*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. xvi–xvii.
23. *World Development Report 1998–99*, p. 1.
24. Hermant Shah, "Modernization, Marginalization, and Emancipation: Toward a Normative Model of Journalism and National Development," *Communication Theory* 6(2) (May 1998), 143–67.
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26. For further details see J. Servaes, T. Jacobson, and S. White (eds.), *Participatory Communication for Social Change*, London: Sage, 1996, and T. Jacobson and J. Servaes (eds.), *Theoretical Approaches to Participatory Communication*, Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999.

3

The Message

The Role of International Organizations

Introduction

Historically, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has tried to avoid controversy. Yet its role, profile, and focus in the international information and communication debate are unmistakable. UNESCO, a specialized agency of the United Nations based in Paris, sponsored crucial international conferences that focused on the global communication debate and also directed its research program toward promoting new policy initiatives, such as the New World International and Communication Order (NWICO). Initially UNESCO invested much, backstage as well as publicly, in NWICO. This eventually led to major problems for the agency, the greatest of which was the withdrawal during the 1980s of the United States and the United Kingdom from UNESCO membership. When they left, they also took their crucial financial support, which had been about one-third of UNESCO's total annual budget. UNESCO put its efforts and credibility into supporting a call for NWICO, but with the demise of the Cold War, UNESCO was found wanting. It had made a strategic mistake in relying extensively on strong Soviet support for NWICO.

Before describing the critical historical meetings and stakeholders in the global debate, it is important to note that the global media have two rather distinct origins. In the United States, their origins are strongly rooted in commercial media systems in which advertising and market forces play crucial roles. Initially with newspapers, radio, and now with television, telecommunications, and the Internet, the US model is one of corporate influence with private ownership and control. The US model treats media and culture as economic commodities. By contrast, in Europe and in most countries of the world, the historical model is one of government ownership or government control of the mass media. The BBC is a good example of a non-commercial radio and television network subsidized by both the government and listeners or viewers, who pay an annual license fee. In most of the world (in particular former colonies of European countries), radio evolved as a

government medium without commercials or the influence of marketplace competition. The role of electronic media was to inform, educate, and "entertain", not to make money from advertisers. Broadcasting monopolies were the early pervasive global model. When television technology emerged, these same government-approved outlets took responsibility for television broadcasting. For several decades they limited the number of national television networks to only one or two, much as they did with radio. They viewed the media as cultural partners that were necessary to promote a nation's history, culture, education, and the arts. When commercial television emerged, a mixed model was accepted in Europe and in many other countries. The commercial model of the United States was frowned upon until vast audiences began viewing the shows presented by new alternative commercial radio and television stations. With deregulation and the advancement of cable and satellite technologies, several competing commercial broadcasting systems were born. These new stations, systems, or networks frequently are foreign media giants, such as Disney, MTV, ESPN, or Fox, and frequently reach larger audiences than the original domestic government-controlled networks.

It is important to keep this duality of approach in mind when considering the following the global debates. The debates themselves tended to move along two different tracks, the one track being more commercial, market-driven, and oriented to free enterprise, the other being non-commercial, publicly funded, and government-controlled and government-regulated in the public interest. The following sections review the history of the international communication debates, illustrating the global fundamental differences in the origins, philosophies, roles, and environments in which global communication stakeholders have operated and, in some monopolistic, government-regulated environments, continue to operate.

More than half of the nations in the world – those in the peripheral regions – still place some restrictions on journalists or media outlets. Even though the commercial, advertiser-supported networks have attracted by far the largest audiences internationally, there is still a dedicated and loyal niche audience supporting public broadcasting, led by outlets such as the BBC. Many non-Americans view the international communication debate from a very different perspective: "Decolonization in itself has not made the world more just and peaceful. The evidence shows more news and images come from the Western world and the access to non-Western culture in terms of information, knowledge, entertainment and images becomes more scarce."

UNESCO: Backdrop to the NWICO Debates

UNESCO, originating in Great Britain in 1945, acknowledges in its constitution that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." On the basis of this lofty ideal, it has transformed itself from a passive force into an active force in international affairs. It views its mission as that of a catalyst for and supporter of development:

Both on the theoretical and the practical levels, UNESCO has a vital role to play. The current economic relations between industrialized and developing countries certainly must be transformed, but on their own they cannot change the political and socio-cultural factors that shape integrated developments. Thus UNESCO has the task of helping: to enlarge the scientific and technological bases which permit each country to use its natural resources better;... to increase and improve communications and

information systems;... to promote the progress of social sciences so that each society can undertake its own studies and utilize the instruments of change without losing its own identity.¹

Formally established as a specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946, UNESCO entered the international arena with 20 member states, the vast majority being core nations. Its budget is drawn from a levy imposed on each member state. Although based in Paris, the Secretariat draws its personnel from all member states.² In the early years, all members were core or semiperipheral nations. Peripheral nations began joining UNESCO after World War II. Many were former colonies of European core nations – this created a tense working environment. Today, delegates from several peripheral nations hold senior positions in UNESCO. To a large extent most peripheral nations view UNESCO as the one specialized agency of the United Nations which understands them and promotes their needs and agenda with its focus on a broad range of development initiatives.

UNESCO's mandate is broad, covering educational, scientific, cultural, and communication programs and research projects around the globe. The convening and sponsoring of international ministerial and research conferences to discuss various aspects of this broad mandate is one of UNESCO's most important and time-consuming tasks. In fact, it is through this role that UNESCO became a major player in the international communication debates that led to NWICO.

Originally, the Western nations, particularly Britain, France, and the United States, dominated UNESCO. However, beginning in the 1950s and continuing today, power and influence shifted as a result of the continual addition of former colonies. The one country one vote procedures that govern the agency have provided the peripheral nations with a voice and power. During the 1960s, the shared ideological and economic conditions of several of these peripheral nations led to the development of a power bloc or lobby known as the Group of 77. Although this bloc has grown to include well over 100 nations, its role and that of these newly emerged nations within UNESCO is fraught with contradictions. As UNESCO expert Richard Hoggart explains:

The new nations, who were, in general, creations of the early sixties, tend to take the UN seriously though ambiguously. Since the UN was set up by the victorious allied powers, it has the stamp of Western ways of thinking. On the other hand, its record in anticolonialism is good and it has made a considerable contribution to the emergence of some new states. Their relationship to the UN is therefore rich in ambiguities.³

This ambiguity is no better illustrated than in their attitudes toward global communication. On the one hand, many of these nations want – some desperately – to become modern industrialized countries with all the media trappings that money and technology permit, such as color digital television, personal computers, cellular phones, and satellites. Yet, as noted earlier, most lack even the basic telecommunication infrastructures for telephone, let alone sophisticated ground terminals for satellite television transmission, or broadband cable or fiber optics for Internet access. Some of their populations cannot even read. At the same time, many of these nations reject Western culture – Hollywood films, Madison Avenue commercials, and core nation or foreign-produced television programming. Many in the peripheral zone will accept only indigenous domestic media products. The dilemma, of course, is that core nation technology and shows are easily accessible and cheaper than the production or creation of high-quality indigenous systems or software.

Throughout its existence, UNESCO has had its critics. Part of that criticism is a result of the periodic negative assessment of its parent, the United Nations. Another flash point, during the mid-1970s, was a decision that excluded Israel from the European regional grouping, creating a barrage of criticism from the Western press, and leading the United States to temporarily withhold its contribution to UNESCO, an amount equal to about 25 percent of the agency's total budget. Recently the United States again withdrew following a pro-Palestine vote.

Paradoxically, another cause for criticism was the consistent demand of peripheral countries for better development initiatives. UNESCO's initial response to critics was to focus on education, which culminated in the publication of the 1972 Faure Commission report, *Learning to Be*.⁴ But with the completion of that major effort, a substantive policy vacuum developed that permitted the introduction of a series of resolutions by republics of the Soviet Union concerning the development of national media and communication policies. UNESCO, core governments, and multinational media corporations largely ignored the issues and questions being raised because they underestimated the strength, determination, voting power, and depth of animosity felt by both the Soviet Union and peripheral nations. These peripheral nations had a long list of grievances about international media flows. The lack of substantive policy permitted the Soviet Union and several peripheral nations to hijack UNESCO's planning agenda in the late 1970s. The result was the eruption of the global communication debates which dominated the activities of UNESCO for more than two decades. This chapter highlights the major forums in which the media and communication debates crystallized. Even today, many nations around the world are concerned about and critical of the impact of foreign software on their domestic values, attitudes, and beliefs. A good example is the concern of the American-dominated Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). It is based in California and its main task is to manage the allocation of Internet domain names and addresses globally. Several critics want to turn ICANN over to a new UN agency and to remove it from the hegemonic control of the US government.

Identifying the Issues and Taking Sides

The debate officially began in 1970⁵ when UNESCO's General Assembly outlined the need to articulate national communication policies and a series of publications dealing with this issue began to emerge. This examination, by the peripheral nations in particular, led to increased documentation and greater awareness of the one-way flow of media messages from core to peripheral nations. It also became apparent that national communication development policies for semiperipheral and peripheral nations could not be produced when so much of their media were produced or controlled by foreign firms based in London, Paris, Toronto, New York, or Los Angeles.

Subsequently, three significant resolutions were introduced that increased the visibility and divisiveness of the global media issue. The first related to the rapid development of direct broadcast satellite (DBS) technology. DBS allowed media outlets to transmit their messages directly to receiving sets throughout the world. Whereas traditional ground station broadcasting signals could be controlled or blocked to prevent the widespread transmission of alien messages, DBS signals could easily circumvent these restrictions and procedures. In response, UNESCO passed a resolution – by a vote of 100 to 1, with the United States as the only dissenter – to require satellite broadcasters to obtain the prior

consent of national governments and their regulators before transmitting messages to a foreign territory. Even though there was no technical way to enforce the resolution, its passage represented a bold rejection of US communication policy, along with the “free press” and “free flow” rhetoric and business practices.

The second resolution called for regional meetings of experts to discuss national communication policies. This resolution received the unanimous support of the General Assembly, but dissension arose when it was decided to hold these meetings in peripheral regions and not in the core industrialized nations, as had been UNESCO's tradition. A few of the key early meetings were held in Latin America.

The third contentious resolution, which was introduced by the USSR, sought to acknowledge both the right and the responsibility of national governments to control the media messages available to their citizenry. Although the resolution failed, it was attractive to many peripheral nations, which were heartened to have the support of at least one of the superpowers. Although the peripheral nations had achieved a significant presence in UNESCO, this Soviet “sharing of the minds” with respect to communication policy lent strength to their votes, opinions, and influence. For their part, the Soviets had no journalistic qualms or ethical dilemmas about extending international government control of media; clearly, their major objective was to aggravate the United States, Europe, and other core nations.

The Non-Aligned Movement

As the process of decolonization continued and previous colonial powers no longer had control over the foreign policy of their former colonies, many developing nations feared becoming satellites or pawns of one of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Consequently, a new political pressure group emerged. In 1973 a summit meeting of foreign ministers of non-aligned countries met in Algiers. During this meeting, participating nations acknowledged their desire to develop a unique foreign policy stance independent of both the United States and the USSR. They wanted to create a “third option” to reflect their independence. Many of the policy positions postulated sought to overcome the consequences of past colonization. Among these was a demand for the decolonization of information and an end to the one-way flow of media.

A series of non-aligned conferences followed in Peru, Tunisia, Mexico, India, and Sri Lanka. At each successive meeting, the rhetoric and action progressed from attacking transnational communication corporations to developing an action plan for the establishment of a wire service, Inter Press Services, which would begin as a pool of contributing government information services. Additional issues included debate about the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and awareness of the growing power of a nucleus of oil-rich, non-aligned countries in the Middle East, known as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

In addition to the non-aligned summit meetings, a crucial seminar was held at the University of Tampere in Finland. Finland's President Urho Kekkonen, in addressing the issue of cultural imperialism, asserted that the theory of the “free” flow of information was really a rationale for a “one-way” flow. Not coincidentally, a major research study was also presented at the conference that documented the pervasive influence of US and British television program sales internationally.⁶ As research increasingly revealed evidence of the one-way flow of media products, particularly wire services, the anti-Western rhetoric escalated.

Meetings in Latin America

While the non-aligned countries proceeded to articulate their complaints and to develop communication strategies, several UNESCO-sponsored meetings were convened to investigate the disparities in international information flows and participation in national communication policy development. The major issues quickly became the relationship between communication policies and economic, social, and cultural development, and the role of governments in promoting the latter by controlling the former. A major conference to examine these questions was set for July 1976 in San José, Costa Rica, but two background meetings were held: in Bogota, Colombia, July 4–13, 1974, and Quito, Ecuador, June 24–30, 1975. Background papers, data, and research documents, which attacked AP and Reuters in particular, were presented outlining several grievances about a broad range of international communication issues. Foreign wire services, particularly those headquartered in New York, London, and Paris, came in for considerable criticism for their focus on “bad news” and their coverage of Latin America.

It should be emphasized that all parties to the debate understood that these regional conferences were creating a momentum for a major international conference focusing on media and information flow issues. Global information flows and media policies dominated the debate at UNESCO just as education had done in the 1960s. However, while there had been a general consensus about the positive role and impact of education, a strong and highly divisive polarity of opinion (free press versus government control) was developing on global information policies. To some extent the United States failed to take these meetings and findings seriously.

The 19th UNESCO General Assembly, Nairobi, 1976

The vital role of information and the debate about how to promote development through information policies were the focus of the 19th UNESCO General Assembly. By this time, most peripheral countries had abandoned the desire for and their rhetoric about a free press in favor of a development press, one that would assist in the positive development of their poor nation-states. They wanted a cultural stamp of their own making and not one imported from core nations or “made in the United States.” The director-general of UNESCO, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow from Senegal, Africa, could not have agreed more.

The major document placed before delegates at the Nairobi conference was a resolution similar to the one that had been introduced by the Soviet Union in 1971. It was entitled “Draft Declaration of Fundamental Principles Governing the Use of the Mass Media in Strengthening Peace and International Understanding and in Combating War, Propaganda, Racism and Apartheid.” This declaration, specifically Article 12, which required that national governments take responsibility for all media systems, guaranteed extensive attention from the Western press. Once again, the Western media coverage of UNESCO was very negative. One thorny issue was the call for the licensing of journalists.

Before outlining the major events in Nairobi, I think it is important we remember a situation from the early 1970s that again cemented Western, particularly US, faith in the value of a free press, in which two junior reporters for the *Washington Post*, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, pursued a lead that ultimately led to the resignation of Richard Nixon as president of the United States. The Watergate scandal reinvigorated a latent distrust of government regulations and demonstrated to the people of the United States and other core

nations the need for a press free from government control. Even the mere suggestion of increased government control of the media was anathema to the US public and Western journalists. In a similar fashion, British control of the national press during the Falkland Islands invasion in 1982 irritated many British reporters and publishers as well as the British public. Consequently, the Western model of the press as the “fourth estate” had been strongly reinforced in advance of the Nairobi conference.

Leaving aside other issues, it was Article 12, calling for state responsibility for media activities, that dominated the conference. In the “spirit of Nairobi,” a compromise was reached, mainly behind the scenes, to shelve the draft declaration and to reduce pressure among the peripheral nations and non-aligned militants by forming a new group to study the issue further. UNESCO created the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, headed by Senator Sean MacBride of Ireland.

Having accurately analyzed the strong Western objection to development journalism and government oversight or control of press activities, Director-General M'Bow wanted to avoid an outright showdown, as well as save his career. Although he was able to delay the debate and critical vote until UNESCO's next General Assembly, to be held in Paris in 1978, he also exacerbated the problem by linking the debate over a new international information order to the proposed new international economic order.

New International Economic Order

In order to provide a complete picture of the rise of the non-aligned movement, it is necessary to describe the development of the NIEO. During the early 1970s, the United Nations and its member agencies became major vehicles for change, offering hope to emerging peripheral nations. Many observers were surprised by the extent to which the resolve and the magnitude of change adopted by the United Nations was misanalyzed not only in terms of NWICO, but also with respect to the underlying NIEO. It took Western economists several years to come to grips with NIEO, and only a few understood its link to international communication.

Just what was the NIEO that the United Nations, and therefore UNESCO, was supporting? In effect, it represented a major change for the West, which traditionally controlled the United Nations and its organizations. This was clearly no longer the case. When 146 nations met in Paris for five weeks of UNESCO meetings in the fall of 1978, the largest group, 106 member states, were developing countries, and many were also part of the so-called non-aligned nations. They were originally labelled the “Group of 77,” and this term is still used of them despite their increased size and influence.⁷

Given the shift, it should not be surprising that the pressure for changes to enhance the development opportunities of peripheral nations became a pressing issue on the agendas of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. In response, on May 1, 1974 the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution to adopt a major program of action establishing a new international economic order. The declaration encouraged member states to:

work urgently for the establishment of a New International Economic Order based on “equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and cooperation among all states,” irrespective of their economic and social systems which shall correct inequalities and redress existing injustices, make it possible to eliminate the widening gap between the developed and the developing countries and ensure steadily accelerating economic and social development and peace and justice for future generations.⁸

The result was a flurry of research and conferences conducted to clarify the issues and develop strategies for achieving the goal.⁹

Despite all the activity, enhanced economic development for peripheral nations failed to occur. However, the peripheral nations found an unexpected opportunity for change when OPEC, originally founded in Baghdad in 1960, was able to force a substantial increase in the price of oil, a basic commodity throughout the world.¹⁰ During the 1970s, OPEC quickly became a model for peripheral nations to emulate in hope of obtaining the economic concessions and achieving the financial growth that had eluded them over decades of foreign control and occupation.

The changes in economic orientation and philosophy brought about by NIEO influenced all aspects of the United Nations and UNESCO. Everything from the influence of transnational corporations to the role of the major wire services and the impact of popular culture was examined in light of either NIEO or NWICO. The anti-colonial rhetoric of the new order was harsh. Colonial domination, neocolonialism, racial discrimination, apartheid, media images, cultural imperialism, chronic imbalances, Western hegemony, and violations of human rights were all subject to severe criticism. Although the goals of the new order were lofty, its real objective was to shift international power from Western core nations to a loose coalition of peripheral regions, Arab OPEC regions, non-aligned nations, and socialist countries (namely, the USSR). The next goal was to effect a change in sociocultural priorities under the protection or guidance of NWICO.

The Debate Begins in Earnest

As UNESCO prepared for the next general meeting, the future of Director-General M'Bow rested on how he handled the contentious Draft Declaration on the Mass Media. He realized that the "spirit of Nairobi" had been built on acrimony and distrust. The agreement to establish the MacBride International Commission as a means of buying time and reducing the growing pressure had been worked out backstage at the last moment to avoid a walk-out by Western delegations. That compromise was no longer sufficient to withstand the mounting strain.

M'Bow also had to do something to restore UNESCO's image, which had become severely tarnished. UNESCO's Secretariat perceived the problem as one created by the Western press, which emphasized the negative aspects of UNESCO's leadership, initiatives, and programs. In reality, however, UNESCO's public image was more negatively affected by its shift from a passive, pro-Western agency to an activist, pro-development, periphery-oriented agency. Its ideological commitment to fundamental change, through NIEO, for example, was little understood and was perceived as a threat to the free markets and economic security that core nations had taken for granted since UNESCO's inception in the 1940s. But newly independent peripheral nations looked to this specialized agency of the United Nations to understand and to deal with their international grievances.

As for the plight of peripheral nations, "it was as though they had moved from military colonialism to technological neo-colonialism without a thought beyond the purely practical and profitable."¹¹ Many peripheral nations had rushed to accept Western technology and software designed for other cultures and other needs, and now conceded that Western-controlled aid was not the answer to their problems. They had seen aspects of electronic colonialism and they did not like what they were seeing. They did not want to be consumers of a foreign and alien culture. As a result, peripheral nations approached the media and culture debate with a call for greater distributive justice bolstered by years of discussions.

They had flexed their muscles, voted, received attention, and won; now they were prepared to go after the Western mass media.

In his opening address to the 1978 General Assembly, M'Bow set the framework for UNESCO's future agenda. Noting that "the establishment of a new international economic order constitutes ... one of the major contexts, and no doubt the largest, within which the activities of the Organization will take place," M'Bow continued by asserting that the imbalances between the West and the peripheral nations were not limited to "solely the production and exchange of information and knowledge."¹² In this way, M'Bow insured that NWICO would become further intertwined with the NIEO. After reviewing several other UNESCO activities including human rights, education, disarmament, and science and technology, M'Bow turned to communication. He acknowledged "the task awaiting the international community in this field over the next few years represents a real challenge, since it is a task which is at one and the same time immense, complex, essential and urgent."¹³ Then M'Bow proceeded to review the MacBride Commission, highlighting specific areas that required further research and clarification, including disparities in global communication. In closing, M'Bow criticized his opponents and urged them to adopt NWICO:

I believe very sincerely that the draft now before you could meet with a large measure of agreement, provided that it is read objectively and dispassionately, and that form of words are patiently sought which dispel the ambiguities of hidden motives that some people still read into it. In this way, the large measure of agreement that the General Conference considers necessary could be achieved.¹⁴

M'Bow lost ground quickly as Western nations, in response to his address, spoke up against the submitted draft declaration. In plenary sessions, in corridors, and in media briefings UNESCO was divided along East/West lines, with the East (socialist) receiving support from many peripheral and OPEC nations. It was clear that the controversial draft declaration on the role of the mass media would have significant implications. It represented a distinct change from the free flow of information policy established by the United Nations and formally supported by the United States since the 1940s.

Moreover, peripheral nations clung to their objections to the Western media. Their criticisms reflected three primary issues. The first argument was a straightforward anti-capitalist approach that criticized the commercial orientation of the press, radio, television, and film industries. The second line of attack focused on the one-way flow of information from the United States, through wire services, television programming, music, and Hollywood productions, to other nations, with little if any reciprocal trade. Fear of electronic colonialism motivated the third argument, which featured a dislike of the history, norms, morals, language, lifestyles, and cultural aspects conveyed through the content of core nations' press, radio, television, advertising, music, and film productions.

For many Western delegates, the issue boiled down to one of state control over the mass media. Secretary of State for Canada John Roberts delivered one of the strongest speeches during the entire assembly. In explaining Canada's reservations about the declaration, Roberts stated:

I am making no secret of my disquiet, and that of the Government of which I am a member, concerning the Draft Declaration on the Mass Media ... On every continent there are some people who think that governments should regulate journalists, should tell them, in the public interest, what to write, or should pass judgment on their accuracy.

Canadians do not believe that either politicians or public servants should have anything to say in the management, direction or correction of the media. Quite the contrary. In their view, only a free press can guarantee that the decisions of the state power are in harmony with the wishes of the people. Governments have no means of knowing what the needs of society are for its own well-being, unless they are told by an informed public.¹⁵

The address was well received, and because Canada had a standing in UNESCO, the Western wire services gave coverage to Robert's remarks. In response, Dr. Phillip Muscat from Malta summed up the major peripheral nations' grievances:

The service that emanates from the big international press and news agencies sometimes tends to be slanted against the developing countries of the Third World and their leaders. Great prominence is given to certain news items of minor importance, while national achievements in vital sectors are barely mentioned or wrongly reported. Moreover, in certain instances the international press is used as a destabilizing factor against the governments whose only crime is generally that of standing up for their rights, their sovereignty and independence.¹⁶

Following the plenary session, M'Bow began, as he always did, by criticizing Western press coverage of the issue. He then called for the development of a universal journalistic code of ethics to govern the actions of media and journalists. Many feared that such a code would lead to a system that could ultimately be used to restrict journalists' freedom. The Soviet Union and authoritarian nations thought they had an ally in M'Bow and an issue, NWICO, with which to restrict the Western media.

Ultimately, UNESCO's 20th General Assembly approved a compromise draft declaration on the mass media that endorsed freedom of the press. This represented a significant diplomatic reversal in favor of the West and moderate developing nations and a temporary reprieve for Director-General M'Bow. Although it was M'Bow who had initially presented, endorsed, and pushed the first controversial draft declaration, the Western press unanimously and rightly blamed the Soviet bloc for the attack on their free press philosophy. One suspects that M'Bow, with his back to the wall and his career on the line, abandoned what he had cherished in October to pacify the Western nations and thereby retain their substantial funding. Of course, it is likely that M'Bow also recognized that the forthcoming final MacBride International Commission Report and the next UNESCO General Assembly provided opportunities for him to regroup and to present his NWICO proposal once again.

UNESCO in the 1980s

As described in the previous section, it took a reluctantly accepted eleventh-hour compromise to pull the 20th General Assembly's session on mass communication out of the fire in 1978. Yet the delegates to UNESCO general assemblies continued to put on at least the face of consensus and unanimity at international communication discussions which invariably tottered on the brink of open warfare and collapse. In Belgrade in 1980, the General Assembly adopted a mass media resolution by consensus when nobody called for a vote on it. Unbelievable as it may seem, that resolution actually won approval because it advocated proposals based on the principles of both sides of the debate. The result was an uneven and inconsistent declaration.

Despite its equivocal language, reciprocal concessions, and unanimous approval, the resolution was "one of the most bitterly fought over in UNESCO's history."¹⁷ It revealed the extent to which the Western and developing world positions were irreconcilable. Even though concessions were made by both sides, the peripheral nations, acting with the support of the Soviet bloc, seemed to get the better of the West. According to several observers, their advantage appeared to turn on the inclusion of some principles that could be interpreted as anti-free press.

The launch of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) at the 21st General Assembly also created a great deal of controversy and suspicion. A 39-member intergovernmental council was established to administer the program and set out its priorities and policies. IPDC continues today with the goal of aiding communication projects and training in peripheral nations.

In retrospect, the 21st General Assembly was remarkable for the decisions made. It not only approved a version of the NWICO, but also accepted the MacBride Commission report, which clearly endorsed activities that would promote development journalism and communication, and it created the IPDC to implement some of those policies. What was unclear at the time was the degree to which the hostility brewing against Director-General M'Bow would, by mid-decade, reach sufficient intensity to justify the withdrawal of both the United Kingdom and the United States from UNESCO.

The 22nd General Assembly of UNESCO convened in Paris on October 25, 1983. One hundred and sixty-one countries participated in the five-week conference, which turned out to be one of the most critical in the history of UNESCO. Just a few weeks after the meetings were adjourned, US State Department's dissatisfaction with UNESCO's stance on a number of issues led to an announcement of the United States' intention to withdraw from UNESCO at the end of 1984 unless its demands for substantial change were met. The United States did withdraw.

The meetings began with the presentation of "The Draft Programme and Budget for 1984-1985," which was prepared by the UNESCO Secretariat on the basis of the consensus reached by the delegates. Of most relevance to this discussion is "Major Programme III: Communication in the Service of Man," outlined below:

Programme III.1 Studies on Communication:

- (a) to simulate the development of research, especially concerning the sociocultural impact of new communication technologies, the democratization of communication and the future of books and reading;
- (b) to further elaborate the concepts of "the right to communicate" and access to and participation in communication, and to continue to study the idea of the responsibility in communicators;
- (c) to continue the study of methods for planning, programming and financing of communication, with special reference to the communication industries.¹⁸

The program continued by encouraging the reduction of current international communication imbalances through the development of a plurality of information sources and through cooperation and collaboration. It acknowledged that the activities listed in the program would "facilitate a detailed examination of a new information and communication order, with a view to promoting its establishment."¹⁹ It had been hoped that the freedom of the press issue and NWICO, which had divided UNESCO for over a decade, might be only a minor topic at this meeting. On the first day of debate, however, two serious and

contentious issues arose. The first was the substantial increase in the budget for communications. The second was a Soviet Union proposal calling for curbs on press freedom as part of NWICO.

The Soviet delegation realized that the First Amendment was sacred to the US press, and its intention was to aggravate the United States and other Western delegations. The Soviet draft urged UNESCO to draw up a list of "mass media organs" whose reporting had violated the guidelines that the organization had enunciated earlier. These were the same guidelines that most Western governments had criticized as being hostile to the freedom of the press. The Soviets were forced to withdraw their contentious resolution, but its introduction had heightened distrust of NWICO by providing a concrete illustration of its threats to press freedom.

Although the media debate was a key issue, the size of the budget increase created another serious problem for the United States. The United States was the only one of the 161 nations to vote against the \$374.4 million budget. At the final vote, 10 other countries abstained after asking for a budgetary freeze. The final budget adopted was about \$12 million less than that first proposed, but the cuts did not go deep enough for the United States, which had been seeking "zero growth" in all UN agencies.

Although the United States failed to achieve as much as it had hoped, it was certainly more successful than it had been in the past decade. It had curbed the development of NWICO, and there was an emerging shift toward the Western perspective on press matters. Although the final budget did not represent zero growth, it was only 2.5 percent higher than the previous one. So what prompted the United States decision to pull out of UNESCO less than a month later?

Shortly after the close of the 22nd General Assembly, stories began appearing in the US press about the possible withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO. According to a *New York Times* report, the proposal was being considered in the State Department and a decision was expected soon.²⁰ Gregory J. Newell, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, said that his office had conducted a study of the performance of some 19 organizations and noted that in addition to mismanagement and lack of budgetary restraint, there were problems of politicization within many UN agencies. He asserted that internal studies had shown what the Reagan administration viewed as improvements in many UN multilateral agencies, but that UNESCO had responded inadequately. Newell then ordered a complete review of UNESCO, which would later justify the US withdrawal.

Opponents of the withdrawal pointed to the improvements made at the 22nd General Assembly. They feared that withdrawal would leave the organization vulnerable to those who opposed US interests. Moreover, the United States Commission for UNESCO, while acknowledging there were problems, voted by an overwhelming majority to continue membership and to fight for change from within. But Newell recognized the vulnerability of UNESCO and used it to condemn and threaten the entire UN system.

Following the reviews, the US State Department recommended, on December 21, 1983, that the United States file notice of its intention to withdraw from UNESCO on January 1, 1985. The decision had to be made by December 31, but the United States would have one year in which to reassess the situation. President Ronald Reagan sent a formal letter of withdrawal to Director-General M'Bow on December 29, making it clear that the departure was temporary and that the United States retained the right to rejoin. According to a State Department spokesperson, the decision was taken because "UNESCO has extraneously politicized virtually every subject it deals with, has exhibited hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and a free press, and has demonstrated

unrestrained budgetary expansion."²¹ Under President Reagan the White House and the Department of State had ignored the United Nations and UNESCO and now they were trying to punish the United Nations for promoting policies that questioned the United States' role as a global commercial power.

Officially, the State Department's recommendation to withdraw from UNESCO was based on what it identified as three major problems:

- 1 the politicization of issues;
- 2 the promulgation of statist concepts; and
- 3 mismanagement and fiscal irresponsibility.

The United States officially withdrew from UNESCO in January 1985. (It returned under President Bush in 2002 and now has left again.)

New Era, Leaders, and Strategy

M'Bow stepped down as director-general at UNESCO in 1986, leaving it politically weakened and fiscally poor. His successor, Federico Mayor, from Barcelona, Spain, was elected as the new director-general in 1987 and held office until 1999. During his tenure, Mayor altered the agency's role and did not support NWICO. Mayor assumed the leadership of UNESCO at arguably the lowest point in its history. Its budget had been slashed as a result of the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom, and negative media coverage by Western newspapers and magazines had tarnished its reputation.

Mayor issued a new communication strategy, stressing the Western principles of freedom of press and freedom of expression, and the development of an independent and pluralistic media. This philosophical and ideological shift was not only more attractive to the West, but it also coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, which raised expectations of an independent press throughout central and eastern Europe.

In order to implement the new communication proposals, Mayor announced that a series of UNESCO meetings would be convened in Namibia, Kazakhstan, Chile, and Yemen. At each of these regional meetings, UNESCO's free press communication proposal was to be enunciated, and ideas to promote press freedom and media pluralism in the regions would be explored. For example, the Windhoek Resolution, which emerged from the 1991 Namibia conference to promote a pluralistic and free African press, declared that:

- 1* Consistent with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.
- 2 By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.
- 3 By a pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.

- 4 The welcome changes that an increasing number of African States are now undergoing towards multiparty democracies provide the climate in which an independent pluralistic press can emerge.
- 5 The worldwide trend towards democracy and freedom of information and expression is a fundamental contribution to the fulfilment of human aspirations.²²

Wherever Mayor went he promoted the new UNESCO communication strategy, primarily to two audiences: the current UNESCO membership and the United States. Not only did he advocate resolutions supporting new free and pluralistic press initiatives throughout the regions of the world, but he also sought to convince the United States that UNESCO's communication policy was very much in line with American free press traditions and that the United States should return to UNESCO. Support for NWICO also fell with the Berlin Wall.

This revised communication policy at UNESCO paved the way for the return of the United Kingdom, but the United States was not persuaded. In fact, UNESCO's critics in Congress, the State Department, and outside of government remained adamant that the United States stay out of UNESCO.

UNESCO in the 1990s and Beyond

In the early 1990s, as a result of dramatic but peaceful political revolutions, the former Soviet Union and its client states rapidly abandoned totalitarian structures, including their press systems. Consequently, many journalists and editors from the newly independent states of eastern and central Europe began to participate in the new communication strategy debate within UNESCO. The general conferences produced several resolutions supporting the goals of the new strategy. In particular, there was considerable support for independent and free media along the lines of the Western model. In addition, the IPDC encouraged proposals that facilitated the founding of free and open press activities in peripheral nations.

In the late 1990s UNESCO produced a major document titled *World Information Report* which began to detail the information resources in almost 200 countries around the globe. Its publication marked a change in emphasis within UNESCO in the study of the global information highway, including the Internet. The *World Information Report* provided extensive documentation of computer-based information-processing, including the shift toward multimedia, telecommunications, and electronic databases.

The report is divided into three parts. The first section describes the information services in individual countries or regions. The second section details the infrastructures for information industries and focuses on technical issues including multimedia and telecommunications. The final section discusses issues and trends, such as the emergence of the information society, information highways, economic implications, copyright matters, and other social or legal questions. The report concludes with a chapter outlining the necessity for international cooperation in order to insure access for all through the interconnection of global information technologies.

In October 1999 two important events occurred in UNESCO. First, a new director-general was elected after major candidates had emerged from Australia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Japan. The Japanese ambassador to France, Koichiro Matsuura, began his six-year term as director-general of UNESCO immediately, presiding over an annual budget of \$300 million, and was re-elected to a second term. Since the last two directors-general had

come from the core nations of Spain and Japan, the next director-general was elected from a semiperipheral nation – Irina Bokova from Bulgaria. In 2011 she issued a statement about the exit of the United States:

In this time of economic crisis and social transformation, I believe that UNESCO's vital work to promote global stability and democratic values is in America's core interests.

The United States is a critical partner in UNESCO's work. The withholding of US dues and other financial contributions – required by U.S. law – will weaken UNESCO's effectiveness and undermine its ability to build free and open societies.

US funding helps UNESCO to develop and sustain free and competitive media in Iraq, Tunisia and Egypt. UNESCO literacy programmes in areas of conflict give people the critical thinking skills and confidence they need to fight violent extremism. To sustain the democratic spirit of the Arab Spring, UNESCO is training journalists to cover elections objectively.²³

The second event concerned allegations of cronyism and mismanagement, specifically that the French government had used the Paris-based UNESCO to place former government aides on UNESCO's payroll throughout the 1990s. The British newspaper the *Guardian* ran extensive stories documenting the administrative problems, going so far as to report that almost half of UNESCO's appointments in the 1990s failed to meet the administrative criteria for credentials and for fair and open competition for senior appointments.²⁴

In 2004 Matsuura organized a meeting to draft a global convention on the protection of cultural diversity and artistic expression. This followed an earlier 2004 meeting with over 600 delegates from 132 UNESCO member states, and numerous NGOs, at which the protection of cultural goods and services (including, for many of the participating nations, the mass media) was discussed. This Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions put UNESCO on a likely collision course with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The convention was approved by UNESCO in 2005, with only the United States and Israel voting against it. The convention seeks to affirm the rights of nations to determine their own cultural policies, and to recognize that culture is linked to identity, values, and concept of self. The convention does not regard culture as a commercial good to be bought and sold, like cars or wheat, but as a distinct and in many cases unique entity which thus needs to be protected from electronic colonialism. The convention covers the five related activities of creation, production, distribution, access to, and enjoyment of cultural expressions and activities. Finally, it also seeks to protect languages, particularly diverse or indigenous languages.

The WTO is seeking to expand its mandate by including cultural industries in its remit in such a way as to reduce all protectionist measures, such as quotas, grants, subsidies, license fees, and a host of other protectionist tariffs. This matter has the potential to become a major global public policy issue, with the United States on one side and the cultural nationalists from many nations on the other.

Finally, UNESCO is also heavily involved in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS; see Chapter 5). UNESCO is providing assistance for many of the WSIS action plan areas under the umbrella of its major initiative "Knowledge Societies." Some critics of the WSIS claim that it seeks to promote governments having a role in media oversight, and to them it sounds like a resurrection of the discredited NWICO. Given that

the second meeting of WSIS was in anti-free-press and authoritarian Tunisia, the outlook was dim for all agencies, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO, which sponsored WSIS and supported the bizarre selection of Tunisia for a major international conference dealing with the media and communication.

Conclusions

Although the UNESCO General Assembly has always addressed 13 major programs, beginning with the 1976 meeting in Nairobi, its conferences have been dominated by the single communication program, NWICO, and its fallout. Like a lightning rod, NWICO attracted all the media attention. Not only was it an issue of distinct interest to the media, but it also polarized the delegates to the point that the United States and the United Kingdom withdrew from membership of UNESCO. It also created significant public image problems for the agency and threatened its internal operations and financial stability. Today, UNESCO still has major fiscal and image problems. Historically, the debate was about aspects of electronic colonialism that the core nations did not want to hear about, deal with, or come to terms with. Peripheral nations were concerned that their cultures, values, languages, and influence were being displaced by slick, heavily advertised sounds and images from a few core nations.

Although there is little doubt among those familiar with UNESCO that the organization does sound work in several areas ranging from literacy and environmental concerns to scientific and educational topics, these efforts receive scant attention at the general assemblies and in the global media. This imbalance is clear when one realizes that UNESCO's communication sector receives less than 10 percent of the agency's budget, but well over 90 percent of its media coverage. The problem is further complicated because that coverage, particularly in Western nations, is overwhelmingly negative. It is difficult, therefore, for concerned individuals and governments to be supportive of UNESCO when the public at large is not favorably impressed, and when the uninitiated believe that all UNESCO does is debate communication and promote anti-free-press policies.

The historical role of the former Soviet Union is also clear. It was obvious to many that the Soviet Union was promoting an anti-free-press agenda and that it had considerable rein within the halls of UNESCO. A second challenge related to internal leadership. After 11 years as director-general, M'Bow had failed to respond to the growing negative perception of UNESCO, even within the UN system. His term came to an abrupt end in 1987. Finally, and perhaps most surprising, was the implosion of the Soviet Union, which spelled the end of its role as the great benefactor, champion, and savior of UNESCO and NWICO.

Despite the problems NWICO created, the overall debate in UNESCO has been informative. It not only forced a reanalysis and reaffirmation of its values, but also accentuated the need for hard data and the planning of practical strategies in order to enhance communication development throughout the world. NWICO continues to evolve in its search for practical and applied measures aimed at redressing media imbalances and promoting greater concern for cultural sensitivity and indigenous software. The peripheral nations still cling to NWICO in the face of greater core nation media pressure to adopt Western philosophies, products, and practices. Finally, a small group of academics and journalists from around the globe continue to promote the aims of NWICO. Under the banner of the MacBride Round Table, they meet every two years to examine the state of affairs in peripheral nations.²⁵ This is an advocacy group created in 1989 to examine the global communication imbalances identified in the 1980 MacBride Report, titled *Many Voices, One World*, commissioned by UNESCO.²⁶ It is expanding the research agenda to

include Internet issues as part of the NWICO legacy. Yet for the most part NWICO is a dead issue. As Ulla Carlsson sums it up: "The only concrete political result of the work on a NWICO within UNESCO was a focus on the development of national media in the third world through, among other things, increased development assistance."²⁷

Finally, UNESCO is moving into an area loaded with contention: the Convention on Cultural Diversity.²⁸ This hot issue could once again see major donor nations re-examine their commitment to UNESCO and its programs.²⁹

Notes

1. UNESCO, *What is UNESCO*, Paris: UNESCO, 1977.
2. For an excellent look at the internal workings and problems of UNESCO's Secretariat, see former Assistant Director-General Richard Hoggart's *An Idea and Its Servants: UNESCO from Within*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1978.
3. Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, p. 64.
4. Edgar Faure et al., *Learning to Be*, Paris: UNESCO, 1972.
5. Some analysts date the beginning of the NWICO debate to 1968, when the Declaration on Human Rights was amended to include the notion of a balanced and free flow of information. Given the subsequent differences in interpretation, policy decisions, and political maneuvering related to this phrase, it is interesting to note that it was the United States that first introduced the amendment.
6. Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis, *Television Traffic: A One Way Street? A Survey and Analysis of the International Flow of Television*, Paris: UNESCO, 1974.
7. Brenda Pavlic and Cees Hamelink, *The New International Economic Order: Links between Economies and Communications*, Reports and Papers on Mass Communication 98, Paris: UNESCO, 1985.
8. United Nations, *Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order*, G.A. Res. 3201, Sixth Special Session, UN Supp. (No. 1), UN Doc. A/9559.
9. See, e.g., UNESCO, *Moving Towards Change: Some Thoughts on the New International Economic Order*, Paris: UNESCO, 1976.
10. The history of OPEC is also viewed by communication scholars as a classic case study of initial Western media inattention, and then biased reporting, once OPEC was able to establish itself as a major instrument of political and commercial power – extending to the gas pump.
11. Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, p. 193.
12. UNESCO 20C/Inf. 9, October 28, Paris: UNESCO, 1978, p. 4.
13. UNESCO 20C/Inf. 9, p. 14.
14. UNESCO 20C/Inf. 9, p. 15.
15. John Roberts, UNESCO document 20C/vr (prov), November 6, 1978, press release.
16. Phillip Muscat, UNESCO document 20C/vr (prov), November 4, 1978, press release.
17. *New York Times* (October 25, 1980), p. 14.
18. UNESCO, *Draft Programme and Budget for 1984–1985*, "III: 'Communication in the Service of Man,'" 22C/5, Paris: UNESCO, 1983, p. 2.
19. UNESCO, *Draft Programme and Budget for 1984–1985*, p. 3.
20. *New York Times* (December 15, 1983), D1.
21. *New York Times* (December 30, 1983), D4.
22. UNESCO, *Declarations on Promoting Independent and Pluralist Media: Declaration of Windhoek*, Paris: UNESCO, May 3, 1991, mimeographed, p. 4.
23. Director-General Irina Bokova, press release, February 11, 2011.
24. Jon Henley, *Guardian*, October 18, 19, 21, 1999.
25. This group seeks to examine issues of access, ownership, equality, and trends in global communication in the tradition of the MacBride Report. See, e.g., Richard Vincent, Kaarle Nordenstreng, and Michael Traber (eds.), *Towards Equity in Global Communication*, Crosskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999.
26. Sean MacBride, *Many Voices, One World*, New York: Unipub, 1980.
27. Ulla Carlsson, "From NWICO to Global Governance of the Information Society," in Oscar Hemer & Thomas Tufte (eds.), *Media and Global Change*, Gothenburg, Sweden: Nordicom, p. 208.
28. The background, related activities, and future plans/meetings of the convention are available at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/diversity/convention> (accessed August 13, 2013).
29. Events at UNESCO are a lot like history on the run. To keep up with matters discussed in this chapter, including the agenda of the new Director-General, Irina Bokova, see www.unesco.org/