

“The New World Information and Communications Order”: Revisiting an International Debate
over News Media in the Context of Ascending Neoliberalism

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Abstract

This thesis investigates a debate that took place from 1975-1985, largely within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), over the international flow of information and news media. This work looks closely at two key phases in the confrontation. The first, taking place from 1975-1980, can be characterized as the rise, and early success, of a Third World movement to create a more equitable flow of information on the global stage. This moment witnessed the successful attempt by nations of the Third World to both politically problematize the imbalanced flow of information, while at the same time to bolster practical and technical avenues of communication. Unesco, under the helm of Director-General Amadou M'Bow, was central in coordinating, funding and lending moral support, both to technical and normative transformations. In this first phase, the Western bloc responded to the Global South with a "Marshall Plan" approach. This plan was characterized by passive negotiation, attempting to delay the more radical Third World voices in the realm of information and media by placating moderate critics; this was enacted by offering a decidedly non-political material transfer of funds, technology and manpower.

The second phase of this debate, beginning in 1981, showcases how the Western bloc warded off significant transformations in the realm of information and communication through a successful campaign against the "inappropriately politicized" Global South. Unesco quickly became the main target of opprobrium. The election of Ronald Reagan marked a turning point from American accommodation and engagement to outright hostility and disengagement. The Reagan administration began to pursue legislation and international declarations to coordinate resistance to the normative critiques emanating from the Third World. As this show of force failed to alter the course of Unesco and the Third World, Reagan vowed to withdraw from the agency. The United States officially withdrew its membership on January 1, 1985. In the end, Unesco found itself hamstrung by the precipitous reduction of funding and legitimacy that came with the shocking news of withdrawal. Although the United States was willing to aid and fund the development of media technology and institutions throughout the world - notably through NGOs such as the World Press Freedom Committee and Freedom House - the debate over the "politics" of information was effectively precluded as the neoliberal consensus of "information as commodity" became universally accepted.

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My Dear Confrère, I am happy to see you always so burning with energy, but your next book prepares for you some rude combats. It requires a bold courage to dare, when one is alone, to attack the monster, the new Minotaur, to which the entire world renders tribute: the Press.¹

- Romain Rolland

Introduction:

This thesis investigates the decade-long confrontation that took place from 1975-1985, largely contained within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), over the call for a “New World Information and Communications Order” (NWICO). It was at the sixteenth General Conference of Unesco, taking place in Paris during the fall of 1970, that the seeds to this “Great Debate” over media can be said to have been sewn. At this meeting, representatives of Byelorussian SSR submitted a resolution, entitled “Public information and promotion of international understanding.” This resolution represented the first step made by a member state of Unesco to lay out and define concrete principles, responsibilities, and codes of ethics involved in the production and dissemination of information on the domestic and international stages. In particular, this proposal invited “all States to take necessary steps, including legislative measures, to encourage the use of information media” against propaganda.² Although it was not considered particularly controversial at the time, the reactions to this proposal make clear the stark differences in ideology among member states

¹ A letter to Upton Sinclair from Romain Rolland, October 6, 1919. Reproduced in Sinclair’s monograph *The Brass Check : A Study of American Journalism*, (February, 1920).

² *Records of the General Conference, Sixteenth Session* (Paris, 12 October to 14 November 1970), Volume 1: Resolutions, Paris: Unesco, 1971, p. 60. Quoted in: George Gerbner, Hamid Mowlana, and Kaarle Nordenstreng, eds. *The Global Media Debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1993), 80.

regarding the role of media in society.³ By 1976, at the nineteenth Unesco General Conference taking place in Nairobi, Kenya, the simmering disagreements regarding this proposal began to truly boil over. In Nairobi, no longer could these differences in ideology be ignored. There, this “Great Debate” over information truly began. However, while this confrontation certainly started in the 1970s, it can not properly be understood without first discussing an earlier time.

Therefore, this work begins by investigating the relationship between media growth and Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth century. In chapter one, I argue that the inception and evolution of global media institutions from the nineteenth to twentieth century mirrored directly the solidification of European territorial colonialism. This was not merely incidental. European imperialism was able to take its particularly effective form through the use of information technologies such as the telegraph and underwater cables. Before limited by its expansive size, the speedy transfer of information through state-funded media institutions in the late nineteenth century greatly improved the internal cohesiveness of Empire. In other words, information helped solidify Empire, allowing it to be more cogent and contiguous. With this new technology, threats of a military nature could be more easily identified and troops could be more effectively ordered and allocated. Further, political information could be more faithfully and speedily delivered, producing an Empire more politically united than it had before.

As an initially strong state was required to lay and protect cables that were distant from the center, it is no surprise that only a few truly global media Empires prospered prior to World War I. These were *Reuters* of Great Britain, *Havas* of France, and *Wolff* of Germany. The global stature and influence held by these transnational companies owed itself directly to British,

³ “Media,” in this sense, was very broadly defined. The use of the word usually referenced anything from economic data, the sort of information needed to make informed decisions about the world market, to foreign elections and state conflicts, to even more mundane information not of immediate interest to high politics.

French, and German territorial colonialism, respectively. The influence of these companies reflected the global stature of their home nations and their influence on the international stage, and likewise helped to strengthen their Empires in turn. Importantly, the dealings of these companies were decidedly statist in orientation and outlook. Although often referred to as “private,” these companies were tethered both financially and culturally to their home nations.

Unsurprisingly, the tumultuous first half of the twentieth century caused a tremendous shift in power between transnational news organizations. Specifically, Germany’s *Wolff* was dissolved during the interwar period, as three new institutions took its place following the second world war. These reflected the shift of global power away from Western and Central Europe towards two new poles, the United States and the Soviet Union. By mid-century, five transnational media companies, dubbed the “big five,” almost entirely controlled the flow of information on the international stage. These were France’s *Agence France-Presse*, formerly *Havas*; Great Britain’s *Reuters*; America’s *Associated Press* and *United Press International*; and the Soviet Union’s *TASS*. These companies, as before, remained entangled both culturally and politically, if not financially, to their respective home nations.⁴

The shift of global political power and influence away from Europe and towards America was accompanied, likewise, by a shift in ethics. This global transformation is no more apparent than in the words and deeds of Kent Cooper, the head architect of the *Associated Press* in the wake of World War II. This chapter therefore examines Cooper’s memoir, *Barriers Down*, to argue that post-war liberals believed that the shift of hegemony towards America marked a hopeful moment in world history; this moment would be characterized, above all, by the formal

⁴ Oliver Boyd-Barrett, *The international news agencies*. Vol. 13. (Constable Limited, 1980).

and official end of Empire. Alongside this would be the end of “private control” of news. As the European news cartel, as he called it, controlled the flow of information through private dealings and arrangements that took place behind closed doors, the *Associated Press* - and America - would be different. Cooper maintained that the flow of news would be free, and that there would be no regulations or restrictions in the “free flow of information” between and within nations. Cooper was motivated especially by his experiences in the interwar period, as he felt the European news cartel controlled the information flowing into its colonies. Latin and South America had a distorted view of America, he maintained, because *Havas* news was bias. China and Southeastern Europe had a slanted view of America, as well, notably because of *Reuters*. After World War II, this would not be the case. Cooper would bring unbiased news to all corners of the world. This would, he hoped, mark a change in America’s global reputation. With unslanted news, the United States would surely be loved and admired. It would become the single model chosen model for economic, political, and cultural “development.”

This thesis argues that this moment marked a change from European to American hegemony in the realm of information, rather than fully erasing the exclusionary nature of colonialism. In other words, this would not spell the end of barriers in the realm of information. Liberal exclusions and biases continued to exist. Although he argued that his faith in “unbiased” information was wholly American and of his own imagining, Cooper was in fact presented a common form of post-war liberalism and faith in American institutions for the safeguarding of peace and stability. In short, although the United States effectively repudiated “barriers” which were keeping American hegemony from spreading within European territories, hegemony did not cease to exist. In other words, while the *Associated Press* certainly gained a seat at the

political and social table with *Reuters* and *Agence France-Presse*, that did not tear down all spheres of influence.

Chapter two of this work establishes a continuity with Cooper's earlier critique with the later call by nations of the Third World for a New World Information and Communications Order. By the early 1970s, newly independent nations - mostly, but not exclusively nations of the Global South - began to problematize their continued dependency on Western news organizations for information. This chapter focuses on the rise and early successes of the Third World critique in the realm of information. There were two developments of particular importance which showcase the early success of the Third World bloc. The first is the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool, which began operation in 1975. The second is the *MacBride Report*, a seminal document published in 1980.

The Non Aligned News Agencies Pool, begun in 1975, was a cooperative media institution which sought to increase the flow of information between members of the Non Aligned Movement. Importantly, this institution was supported and funded by Unesco. Alongside the more normative critiques emanating from the Third World, I focus on this institution in order to show the practical, technical side of the call for NWICO. Although certainly politically motivated, this stood as a structural attempt to lessen the dependency of Third World nations on Western news. The Yugoslav national news agency, Tanjug, began operation of the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool in 1975. This cooperative news agency was importantly designed not to supplement, but rather to complement international news flowing into member nations of the Non Aligned Movement. As the Ministerial Conference of Nonaligned Countries on the Press Agencies Pool in New Delhi in July of 1976 noted: "Non

aligned countries have few means, in the present situation, to know about each other, except through the channel of the existing international news media and new centres, their own news media being mainly underdeveloped or developed for want of required resources.”⁵

The Non Aligned News Agencies Pool functioned by disseminating news stories internally between member nations of the Non Aligned Movement. These stories were translated into four languages: French, Spanish, Arabic and English. The Pool was designed to both increase the communication between Third World countries, and counter the reputed cultural imperialism by the West (and, to a lesser extent, by the Soviets). The early architects of the News Pool designed it with four main points in mind. First, it was conceived to strengthen communication, understanding and cooperation among the member countries of the Non Aligned Movement. It would distribute “objective” information, notably emphasizing the “progressive economic, socio-political and cultural developments” of Non Aligned Nations. Reiterating this aim, the Pool was conceived to make smoother the flow of “correct and factual information,” while prioritizing stories which emphasize the cooperation and common interests among members. Its aim was not to be a “supranational news agency” nor was it imagined to “substitute news exchange arrangements” which were already firmly set in place. This was a nod to Western news power already entrenched in much of the non-Western world. Further, in comparison with other more radical calls for an immediate “new world order” in the realm of information, the News Pool expressed itself in a decidedly non-aggressive manner. Rather, it was conceived to “fulfill the above-mentioned objectives” and add more balance to the news without threatening

⁵ Indian Institute of Mass Communication, “News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries: A Perspective, (New Delhi: Institute of Mass Communication, 1983), 103.

present interests.⁶ What is important to highlight, then, is that the Pool was designed not only for increasing internal communication between and within non-Western countries. Instead, a major impetus for establishing the News Pool was to produce news stories for Western audiences.

These stories would be written and told from a perspective that these readers would not ordinarily have encountered. In short, the News Pool represented a clear blending of the material and ideological approach to addressing the purported imbalances in global media flows.

A seminal moment of this debate came in 1980, when Unesco published its benchmark study on global media, dubbed *The MacBride Report*. This report (in)famously supported and corroborated Third World criticism, agreeing that there were indeed financial, cultural and structural impediments to a balanced flow of news. Originally proposed as a procedural study looking into the legitimacy and relevance of Third World claims, this report took on a certain life of its own. It almost unconditionally supported the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool and the broader critique over international media. It was not simply the corroboration of Third World critiques that made this report significant. Instead, what made this piece stand out was its balancing of both normative and technical, theoretical and practical elements. In other words, it was not simply a negotiated document which admitted imbalances in information structures, funding and expertise. It did not simply propose “aiding” the Third World to achieve “progress” in journalism and media technology on a linear path with the West. On the contrary, the *Report* problematized the cultural and normative dimensions of information that more closely resembled Third World demands.

⁶ Hifzi Topuz, “United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Meeting of Experts on the Development of News Agencies in Asia,” Colombo 5-9, December, 1977. Page 3. UNESCO Archive, CC/77/Conf.606/7.

The third and final chapter of this thesis describes how, in short, the “Empire struck back.” Beginning in 1977, the Carter administration, along with other Western governments hostile to the idea of a new world order in information, began to mount a united defense. The first phase of this Western defense is best described as a “Marshall Plan” in the sphere of information technology. This strategy was largely defensive, based upon disempowering the more radical critics of the information order by offering to provide aid and support for balancing the flow of information. Importantly, proponents of this strategy readily admitted that there were fundamental structural imbalances in the global media. Hoping to keep the radicals at bay, therefore, this strategy was based upon engagement. In other words, Americans, Australians, the British, Canadians, Norwegians and other Western delegates were vocal and engaged in Unesco debates over NWICO.

The crowning success of this strategy came in 1978, as the Mass Media Declaration was finally passed at the twentieth Unesco General Conference in Paris. The Mass Media Declaration was the process of eight years of negotiation. It began in 1970, when the Byelorussian SSR proposed a resolution on the mass media. This position was increasingly viewed in the West as anti-liberal. In other words, speaking of obligation, responsibility, or duties held by the media was seen as counter-intuitive. The media did not have duties, Western actors maintained, but held the state in check; certainly not the other way around. However, although Western governments were vocally and adamantly opposed to any such declaration - beginning with the Byelorussian SSR resolution outlined above - it was, ironically, they who were celebrating this document’s passing. Through constant engagement, the Western nations were able to

successfully water-down this document of all its radical proposals in the realm of information. By the time the piece was passed, it was unrecognizable from its original draft.

The second half of Chapter 3 focuses on the final stage of this debate, taking place after the publication of the *MacBride Report* outlined above. This was the process of *disengagement*. As Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency of the United States, his administration markedly shifted the tenor of the Western response to NWICO. No longer would the United States tolerate the political critiques of information emanating from the United Nations. This chapter ultimately argues that Reagan effectively ended this debate by stressing that the free flow of information, as a “human right,” was necessarily above politics and therefore above the purview of the nation-state. By denying that states had any right to discuss media and information, Reagan was able to deny the Third World a voice in problematizing the flow of information on the global stage. This chapter discusses two pieces of home-grown legislation and one international declaration to argue this point: these were the Quayle/Moynihan and Beard Amendments, as well as the Declaration of Talloires. In conclusion, the United States followed through on its threat. It officially withdrew from Unesco on January 1, 1985, immediately withholding its funding to the organization. This amounted to twenty-five percent of Unesco’s entire budget, as it was calculated based upon relative national GDP. Following the United States withdrawal, both Great Britain and Singapore left the agency. This steep reduction of funding and precipitous loss of legitimacy left the agency crippled. The confrontation ended shortly after.

In conclusion, this thesis seeks to look past the highly charged rhetoric which characterized this debate, as both sides were guilty of romanticizing its position, and instead present an historical account of this global debate over information. As Mark Mazower has

noted, “the entire shift to neoliberalism had been driven from the 1970s by American ideological preferences mediated through international institutions.”⁷ As history does not move on its own, but is rather pushed and pulled by ideas, people, and principles, it is important to focus closely on moments of conflict. Change is never passive, but rather a process of muting some voices and accentuating others. This confrontation, taking place both within and without the United Nations, represents a clear resistance to the blanketing neoliberal ideology, and a market media arrangement, which was assuming global status by the end of the 1970s.

⁷ Mark Mazower. *Governing the world: The history of an idea, 1815 to the present*. (Penguin, 2012), 376.

Chapter 1

Colonial Telegraphs, Empire, and the Rise of American Liberalism

Before closely examining the history of the call for a New World Information and Communications Order, it is important to demonstrate what, exactly, the Third World was problematizing in the 1970s. To do this, it is useful to demonstrate the progression of the “big five” news agencies that attained veritable global status by the dawn of the twentieth century. Therefore, this chapter focuses the early history of the European news agencies - Reuters, Havas and Wolff - to argue that their strength relied on territorial colonialism, as imperialism paved the way for affording and laying expensive cables, protecting them once laid, and safeguarding the very journalists who navigated these “peripheries” of the world. These journalists were key actors in the wider web of imperial relations. If cables were the spinal cord of Empire, its journalists were its nervous system. Dangers, threats, encounters - sensational elements of what was supposedly an intrinsically hostile outside world - was wrote for ready domestic consumption, by leaders and public alike, in the metropolises of imperial power.

This chapter investigates the history of European and American news agencies to set the stage for the critique taking place in the 1970s. It highlights the turn from European to American hegemony, to argue that exclusions were not erased through the end of territorial imperialism. By centering Kent Cooper’s memoir, *Barriers Down*, I demonstrate that the Associated Press gained a seat at the table with Reuters, Havas and Wolff by lauding ethics, principles, and professionalism. These epistemological values veiled what was, in reality, shifting hegemony on the international stage from Europe to America. While the breakthrough Cooper details certainly gave America a position at the table of big international news agencies, it did not, as he vocally

maintained, deconstruct global barriers. The cost of cables and transmissions precluded much of the non-Western world from competing with previously colonial news agencies. Further, politics remained an important barrier. In other words, hostility by Western actors represented perhaps even a greater obstacle to non-Western news agencies. Before moving into the 1970s, it is important to demonstrate the reality of Western news institutions which became objects of contestation in the decades after World War II. After the Paris Peace Treaty, what was once a non-Western world of colonial subjects was now a global community of citizens. In order to maintain stability in this post-colonial world, liberal values and knowledge needed an engine through which to spread. Unlike subjecthood, liberal citizenship was believed to be a social contract which necessitated access to information and knowledge.

The Telegraph as a Technology of Empire

In the decades after World War II, newly independent nations relied almost exclusively on the “five big” news agencies: Agence France Presse, Associated Press, Reuters, United Press International and TASS. These five transnational companies had almost exclusive control over global news cycles and technologies moving into the 1970s.⁸ As wholesalers of news, these agencies produced stories that were purchased by smaller newspapers - national or private - and reproduced for the ready reading by citizens the world over. Therefore, they held great influence over the smaller, often national, news agencies of the non-European world.⁹ It was not mere coincidence, however, that the nascent European media companies of the early nineteenth century - such as Havas, Wolff, and Reuters - became veritably global forces alongside the

⁸ Christian Vukasovich, Oliver Boyd-Barrett, “Whatever happened to Tanjug? Reloading memory for an understanding of the global news system,” *International Communication Gazette* 74, no. 8 (2012): 693-710.

⁹ *Ibid.*

formalization of that continent's territorial colonialism. Rather, these histories are heavily entangled and mutually constitutive.¹⁰ It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that this connection became problematized. For example, *The MacBride Report* recounted that the “criticisms formulated in many developing countries... start from the observation that certain powerful and technologically advanced States exploit their advantages to exercise a form of cultural and ideological domination which jeopardizes the national identity of other countries.”¹¹ Therefore, it is useful before discussing the history and purpose of the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool to demonstrate the relationship between the growth of Western Empire and its market news media.

The telegraph constituted “the spinal cord of the British Empire,” tying disparate, often autonomous peripheries of Empire, together in an umbrella of information.¹² Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne investigate the concomitant growth of technology and Empire in the period after 1860 in their text, *Empires and the Reach of the Global*. “While imperial power remained grounded in the ability of the colonizer to deploy the disciplinary power of violence (or its threat) against the colonized,” they write, “the mechanisms of colonial governance, the ways in which imperial trade was conducted, and the nature of the imperial imagination were reshaped by the exploitative possibilities offered by industrial technologies and the truly global reach of capitalism.”¹³ The year 1870 marked the landmark year in which private British telegraph

¹⁰ Daniel R Headrick, *The tentacles of progress: Technology transfer in the age of imperialism, 1850-1940*. (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1988).

¹¹ Sean MacBride, *Many voices, one world: Towards a new, more just, and more efficient world information and communication order*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 1980), 37.

¹² Daniel R Headrick, *The tentacles of progress: Technology transfer in the age of imperialism, 1850-1940*. (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1988), 101.

¹³ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton. *Empires and the Reach of the Global*. (Harvard University Press, 2014), 83.

companies began to increase their presence across wider reaches of the globe.¹⁴ These cables “not only linked together the scattered pieces of the British Empire, but reinforced Britain’s position as the foremost naval, commercial, and financial power in the world.”¹⁵ While ninety-one percent of British cables were laid by private companies, it is a mistake to view these as anything less than intimately tied to the British crown itself. Cables were at first laid only where they were sure to be profitable. This often left the far-reaches of Africa and other areas of sure political, but little financial interest to London bare. It soon became clear, however, to administrators in the metropole that cables would strengthen the legitimacy and fluency of the colonial administration despite whether it be profitable or not. Important decisions, with immense repercussions, were once deferred to colonial agents merely as a matter of necessity; the metropole could not be waited upon in answer to a pressing concern.¹⁶ The Zulu War in the Southern tip of Africa in the last few decades of the nineteenth century demonstrated this clearly. As decisions in the peripheries were becoming increasingly pressing in the center, no longer could colonial officials have the latitude to make decisions with immensely global repercussions.

... The British, noticing the imperial benefits of receiving quick and reliable information from its far-away, smaller colonies, began subsidizing cable companies to make-up for the lack of economic incentives. “The Zulu War of 1879 turned the matter into an imperial necessity, and the British government agreed to pay 55,000 per annum to the Eastern and South African Telegraph Company to operate a cable from Durban to Zanzibar to Aden, linking it to Eastern’s trunk line.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Bernard Cohn’s work, which demonstrates the imperial pursuit of knowledge through technologies including the census, cartography, and geography, could very well have included journalism. Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: The British in India*. (Princeton University Press, 1996); Ibid, 104.

¹⁶ There is a dearth in scholarship as relates media, knowledge, and Empire. Certainly notions of sovereignty and centralism are informed by expediency of communication. A colonial official in Bengal, for example, in John Stuart Mill’s time, certainly felt more autonomous from the British Crown because of the latitude necessarily given him as relates to decisions on the ground.

¹⁷ Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, 107.

Therefore, state subsidies were required to implement cables in “non-profitable” areas. It was not free enterprise alone, then, but the power of a colonial administration that laid the inordinately expensive cables which existed far into the twentieth century. The wealth which permitted European metropolises to lay these enormously sized cables was, after all, amassed in part from the colonial periphery. As Headrick notes,

Laying a cable was even more expensive than manufacturing it. The ocean floor had to be sounded to find a path that avoided peaks and cliffs. Cable ships had to be large enough to carry hundreds of kilometers of cable coiled up in a water-filled tank, and maneuverable enough to navigate an exact and steady course even in the midst of storms and currents.... Some of the early long-distance cables to America and India were laid by the *Great Eastern*, at the time the only ship which could carry the 4,000 tons of cable needed to cross an ocean. After 1880, Telcon, Siemens, and other manufacturers bought specially designed cable ships. Their cost was high enough to keep small firms out of the business... Of the forty-one cable ships in the world in 1904, 28 were British, 5 were French, and the rest divided among 6 other countries.¹⁸

Therefore, come the twentieth century, Third World critiques went beyond merely exposing the unseemly side of consumerism in a market-based media. Rather, the very roots of international media - its infrastructure, identity, mission and ethics - were exposed as deeply entangled with the history of colonialism and dialectics of power more broadly.

It took short of fifty years, from the Zulu War to the early twentieth century, for the British Crown to amass its expansive territorial Empire into a net of information. In “December 1902 the world was at last girdled by an all-red cable.”¹⁹ This all-red cable, indicating the cables of the British Empire, was followed by other colonial European imperial powers. Havas, Wolff, and Reuters came together to form a news cartel which divided the globe between French,

¹⁸ Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, 103.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 109.

German and British territorial news interests, respectively.²⁰ This agreement was not, in practice, disbanded until the United States news agency, Associated Press, challenged it along with European Empire in the immediate postwar moment.

These agreements and arrangements did not simply disappear as a nominally postcolonial world replaced an imperial one, since the cables remained firmly in the control of Western nations and nationals. As James Brennan asserts, “In the 1960s and 1970s, four news agencies – Reuters, AFP, AP, and UPI – dominated the collection and distribution of international news, providing over 90% of what was printed or broadcast around the world.”²¹ Brennan argues that the transnational news agencies, in this case Reuters, transformed their image as companies seeking to “assist” newly independent news agencies, as the legitimacy of their continued presence became less defensible after World War II. In other words, although these newly independent nations were nominally free to follow alternating visions from the Western model, in truth the space to do so became narrowed on the ground. The transnational companies remained and “trained” in the wake of colonialism, precluding opportunities for news media alternatives. In the wake of European colonialism came Western hegemony in the form of newly universal liberal principles - ethics, professionalism, and standards - which effectively precluding ideological and practical alternatives.

By the 1970s, however, these exclusions became more apparent as the cost of transmitting news outside of the purview of these transnational media companies precluded

²⁰ See: Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen, eds. *The Globalization of News*. (Sage, 1998); Marlene Cuthbert, "Reaction to international news agencies: 1930s and 1970s compared." *Gazette (Leiden, Netherlands)*26, no. 2 (1980): 99-110.

²¹ Brennan, “The Cold War Battle over Global News in East Africa: Decolonization, the Free Flow of Information, and the Media Business, 1960-1980.” *Journal of Global History* 10, (Cambridge University Press: 2015), 333-356. 341.

budding nations from participation. The only way that newly independent nations could effectively participate, it was assumed, was for the state to play a leading role in the dissemination and production of news. In fact, this was precisely the case for the European evolution of news agencies in the preceding centuries, as anxious colonial governments subsidized and extended the growth of its news agencies. By the 1970s, however, this arrangement was rendered as unprofessional and ethically suspect by a West comfortable with a market media solidly in their control.

The next section focuses on Kent Cooper's memoir, *Barriers Down*, to argue that the confrontation in the 1970s was not, in fact, new. Kent Cooper's position in 1942 was remarkably similar to Third World critiques of media power in the 1970s. Denied a position at the table, Cooper asserted that America must lead the way in deconstructing barriers to the free flow of unbiased news. These barriers were not economic, nor were they ideological in origin and function, but rather political obstacles to a freer news. It is important to briefly detail this early debate before dealing the later confrontation of the 1970s.

The American Turn

The "notion that America's journalism, unlike that of other nations, was value-free - a conviction that would again strongly affect America's cultural diplomacy after WWII - provided a sturdy building block in America's imperial ideology."²² Kent Cooper's memoir, *Barriers Down*, in which he recounts his decades-long career at Associated Press, is a good example of the coterminous historical shift from British to American global power.²³ Cooper's story is

²² Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American dream: American economic and cultural expansion, 1890-1945*. (Hill and Wang, 2011), 86.

²³ See Mark Mazower, *Governing the World*.

deeply entangled with other liberal figures who crafted the post-war consensus and developed the United Nations charter of 1948. In short, Cooper assigns to himself and a few other key individuals the credit of establishing a Western news agency that remained above the gesturing and the politics of the day. For Cooper, Associated Press was the ideal. While Reuters and Havas remained bogged in the quagmires of politics, commercial interests, biases, and government “handouts,” the Associated Press, on the other hand, internalized and - according to Cooper - developed the notion that news must be free of state control.²⁴ As he forcefully stated, “To the Associated Press I give credit for the creation of what has turned out to be the finest moral concept ever developed in America and given the world. That concept is that news must be truthful and unbiased.” “I cannot,” he continues, “say that this great moral concept was born as the result of philosophic study or as the result of prayer.” Instead, he attributes this to Western individuals and their particular genius. The philosophical underpinnings of Western liberalism and its long progression were erased, explicitly and brazenly, and replaced with tropes of notably American individualism. Cooper has internalized fully the notion that modernity is on a singular path to be led by a maverick United States.

Having found that Havas held back news reports from South America states under its regional control, Cooper was dismayed. Learning of this “came my idea that The Associated Press news standards should prevail everywhere.”²⁵ These standards included that the free flow of information must be protected against the interests of states. Before acting, Cooper describes how Elmer Roberts, then chief of the AP in Paris, told him of the global news situation outside of American agencies:

²⁴ Kent Cooper, *Barriers Down*, 20.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 35.

It was a discouraging story as Roberts told it. In its essence it meant, as I had suspected, that the agencies drew their vast influence from the support - and in some instances the control - of their governments... Doubtless it was at times a benevolent hegemony, but it still was domination under a firm hand.

Learning of this unfortunate circumstance, Cooper spoke with the then publisher of the *Sacramento Bee*, V.S. McClatchy, who was at the time focusing on Japanese Imperialism overseas which could threaten the United States to the West. “Mr. McClatchy seized eagerly what I had to say for it presented to him an opening whereby America could move to meet this menace [Japanese influence].” Here he shows his cards most tellingly: “If a free exchange of news could be secured, it would mean that Japan and China could be served with unbiased, uncolored facts which would represent [The United States] in its true light.”²⁶ The theoretical underpinnings of this statement suggests that any rational, reasonable mind, would naturally associate and align with Western professionalism, ethics, and practices if only it were served the true facts of the matter; mere propaganda was holding back Western liberalism.

Although Kent Cooper is genuine, idealistic, and more starry eyed than his progenitors decades later, liberalism still holds within it this optimistic, but abundantly fragile, foundation. Light *will* cancel out darkness, if only the light is not held back by some unnatural obstacle or roadblock - be it Soviet communism or Third World “emotionalism.” Capitalist enterprise did not explicitly figure into Cooper’s account. Implicitly, however, the threads were closely associated. As Emily Rosenberg notes,

The free flow of ideas related closely to free trade. In fact, liberal-developmentalists assumed that one free marketplace was a necessary condition for the other. Free flow was also largely defined as the absence of governmental control. Communications media were free if they were not servants of government; if private enterprise controlled communications, the cause of free expression was - almost by definition - advanced. Americans supported private ownership of broadcasting and news services abroad, and

²⁶ Ibid, 35.

they championed the spread of the same advertiser-shaped mass culture developed at home.²⁷

“Unlocking” Japan from Reuters control during the time of World War I lay entirely on humanitarian grounds, as Cooper tells it. In other words, focusing on Europe in order to “unlock South America to The Associated Press,” was viewed purely with regard to freeing the flow of information for the South American people. In characteristic style, Cooper refers to himself more than once as a “crusader” in spreading AP purview.

In conclusion, Cooper’s principles, absurd to today’s reader, remain deeply embedded in the actors who dismissed NWICO in the 1970s. “The new professionals” along with Cooper, “surely viewed themselves as the carriers of the rational solutions around which others would eventually rally. Believing that liberal republicanism on the American model would soon spread worldwide, they could not see how an intelligent, unilateral policy, if properly understood, would be incompatible with a rational, multilateral one. Foreign dissenters were just insufficiently enlightened.”²⁸ Further, “Enterprising pioneers such as John Merrill, Owen Young, Kent Cooper, and Juan Terry Trippe pushed American communications into the world, but they did so with substantial government assistance.”²⁹ Although Cooper enjoyed foiling AP with Reuters and Havas, AP was as deeply entangled with the United States government as the latter two were with the British and French Empire. “Because foreign restrictions and monopolies impeded American expansion in many areas of the world, Wilson and his successors championed the

²⁷ Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 11.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 85.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 107.

doctrines of free flow and equal access to the communications media.”³⁰ In other words, the spread of American principles worldwide was deeply entangled in the news media.

Cooper’s position complicates the later narratives of the 1970s for two main reasons. He bemoaned the “private” dealings of Reuters and Havas, and believed that the pursuit of the “free flow of news” was locally American in belief and inception as a challenge to (European) Empire. He believed sincerely that the only powers holding back the global purchase of American liberal ideology was, in fact, misrepresentations not by states, but by media organizations. These were his barriers, not hostile or censorious states. For Cooper, of the main concerns that runs throughout his 1942 text is that Associates Press (and therefore, America) is being “misrepresented,” “twisted,” and “perverted” by other media powers. It is interesting, as this was exactly the grounding upon which the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool was conceived. For its stated mission was to resist the slanting of Reuters and Associated Press. Cooper, most likely, would have been in full agreement with Third World actors resisting the sway of his very legacy. In fact, for Cooper, running over the media barriers in South America was the “patriotic thing to do.”³¹ Could he have imagined that in three short decades, Associated Press and American hegemony would be that very barrier standing in the way, and precluding, alternative visions?

“But for forty-five years,” Cooper asserts, “Havas has been discrediting North America in South America. It did it from this office by giving a twist to the news and it did it from here to Mexico, our next-door neighbor. That is the way it repaid us in return for The Associated Press permitting it to operate here under our roof.”³² Cooper’s emphasis on “twist” would later be recast by the Third World, alongside the academically inspired cultural critiques of language and

³⁰ Ibid, 89.

³¹ Ibid, 115.

³² Ibid, 116.

imperialism of the late 1970s, as neocolonialism or propaganda. The only way to mollify this present abridgement of news ethics was to attack the “private sphere” that encouraged them.

Cooper was bothered by the fact that private dealings controlled the news media. In his memoir, Cooper focuses on signing the peace treaty of Versailles in the spring of 1920. Mr. Stone, then head of The Associated Press, went to Paris assuming that he would be included in dealings with Reuters, Havas and Wolff. To his dismay, Cooper recounts, “I [Mr. Stone] went over to Paris supposing that I would be taken at once into the confidence of our colleagues. When I arrived I found that they had held private meetings for several days. Although they continued them, I was not invited to participate at all.”³³ These “private dealings” were certainly frustrating to an ascending United States that felt its time at the negotiating table had come. Once given a seat, however, the Associated Press was not as willing to hear critiques of this new, supposedly liberal, “barrier” to a globally balanced flow of news.

³³ Ibid, 98.

Chapter 2

The “Third World” Challenge: The Non Aligned News Agencies Pool and the MacBride Report

As the *Globe and Mail* queried in 1976, “Should an Indian newspaper reader have to depend upon the account of a U.S. or British reporter to learn what is happening in Burma? Or Nigeria? Or Vietnam? For years, the question has been nagging Third World editors who are concerned about the domination of the international flow of news by four Western news agencies.”³⁴

Chanchal Sardar, the director of the Press Institute of India, noted also that “so much of what we learn about the world has been filtered through London or New York.”³⁵ The heavy expense of cables and the necessary infrastructure for expedient dissemination of news became a pressing obstacle, or barrier, for many nations of the Global South by the 1970s. By 1976, this became a veritable confrontation between nations of the West, notably the United States and Great Britain, and the Third World, especially by members of the Non Aligned Movement.

The industry of news production became increasingly a focus, and subject of immense critique, during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. As argued above, since the late nineteenth century, the wholesaling of news stories to smaller national and private newspapers had been dominated by five international news services. These included: Reuters, of Great Britain, Associated Press and United Press International of the United States, Agence France-Presse of France, and finally TASS of the Soviet Union. Clearly, all were belonging to nations of great

³⁴ William Borders, “Third World Nationals Planning News Agency,” *The Globe and Mail* (May 31, 1976). pg 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

global stature on the international stage. The status of these news institutions did not diminish, but rather strengthened, as previously colonized nations gained independence across the globe in the years after World War II. The lasting sway over news production held by the “big five,” as these institutions came to be called, became the subject of an international debate from 1976-1985.

News itself was thought to be an important dimension to national improvement. James Brennan suggests that the “news business and capitalist modes of news production were important agents of state and identity formation processes in the decolonization period, as they had been in both Europe and its African and Asian empires long before the mid twentieth century.”³⁶ Therefore newspapers, despite important educational, regional, class and cultural exclusions which marked their readership, were rendered loci for negotiating and exercising citizenship. Often, knowledge derived from reading the news was seen a means toward achieving “progress,” and ignorance backwardness. It was asserted that the path to development, after decades of experiencing either territorial colonialism or the deleterious effects of imperialism, required unity above all.³⁷ In short, news itself was inextricably linked with notions of development as the postwar years wore on. If the newspapers were vested with the potential to draw together nationals in shared notions of citizenship and directions of development, surely these had the power also to divide. Yet, it became increasingly clear that even national newspapers relied heavily on the “big five” news agencies. As a result, these news institutions,

³⁶ James Brennan, “The Cold War Battle over Global News in East Africa: Decolonization, the Free Flow of Information, and the Media Business, 1960-1980.” *Journal of Global History* 10, (2015): 335.

³⁷ A good example is Julius Nyerere’s Tanzania. The newspapers were of great importance in the decade of the 1970s and the President’s push for *ujamaa*, as citizens of Dar es Salaam were actively negotiating how to achieve ‘progress’, and what, exactly, that slippery notion meant. See Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: youth, gender, and modern style in 1960s Dar es Salaam*. (Duke University Press, 2011).

and the hidden powers behind them, became a focus throughout the 1970s. In short, this culminated in what became known as the Great Debate over the call for a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO), which took place largely from 1976-1984.

This debate cannot be properly understood without differentiating between those pushing for normative, radical transformation in the realm of information and those arguing for the gradual, technical addressing of imbalances. In fact, the central dynamic of this debate was not between the “West” and the “Third World” blocs. Instead, although this research employs those terms, the West and the Third World blocs were themselves both internally divided by moderates and radicals. While everyone agreed - by the late 1970s - that there were indeed imbalances in the realm of information that needed addressing, there were growing chasms within both camps. Within the West, there existed a stark division between those utilizing the carrot and those using the stick method to address this critique. For example, Elie Abel, who as Columbia’s Dean of Journalism and delegate of the United States to the MacBride Commission, argued for ameliorating imbalances on the global stage through technical reform. Further, the Unesco delegate from the United States John Reinhardt, continually promised aid and technical assistance to non aligned nations. Both of these figures had faith in international institutions such as the UN as an appropriate venue for having this discussion. However, as the 1970s came to a close, there were many who showcased the radical voices in the Third World to demonstrate the inappropriateness of this debate *in toto*.

Further, the nations actively pushing for NWICO were divided between those who pushed for Western aid in strengthening their nascent press and those who saw this form of aid as counter-intuitive. Many thought of this form of support as a strategy to “buy out” the Global

South.³⁸ From this perspective, the cultural as opposed to structural elements within the media were problematized. Vocalizing this perspective were the more radical nations within the nonaligned movement. A good demonstration of these divisions is that the sitting Director-General of Unesco throughout this debate, Amadou M'Bow, had been criticized by both sides. Western conservative voices, especially within the media, often painted him as an anti-Western radical in support of strangling press freedom. On the other hand, Kaarle Nordenstreng often criticized him for his moderate stance and for "doing away with normative consideration of the contents of the mass media."³⁹ In short, this debate cannot be understood properly without emphasizing these internal divisions at work.

This chapter argues that the Third World bloc was predominantly pushing for change on both a structural and ideological level in the realm of information and media. Within the high politics at the UN, the arguments of cultural domination and neo-imperialism by the West was certainly an important dimension of this debate. However, on the ground, these ideas meant little. Instead, acquiring funds for the training of journalists, the reducing of tariffs, and the ability to access higher forms of technology were of utmost importance. Although the Non Aligned Movement has been described as highly ideological and relatively radical on the world stage, this chapter discusses in detail the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool in order to demonstrate that technical and practical improvement were more important than normative transformation in the early years of this debate. The next chapter argues that, with the rise of the neoliberals, the normative elements became more heavily emphasized on both sides. But at this time, from 1972-1980, the normative and technical side were not in contradiction; instead, they were

³⁸ See, for example, the writing of Kaarle Nordenstreng.

³⁹ Nordenstreng Kaarle and Lauri Hannikainen. *The mass media declaration of UNESCO*. (Praeger Pub Text, 1984), 132.

blended together. In other words, without improving the ability to produce accurate and readable news stories, the cultural and ideological expression of a nation would suffer. This chapter uses the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool to demonstrate the connection between the normative and practical sides of this debate.

The Non Aligned News Agencies Pool

There were seen to be significant structural impediments standing in the way of nations of the Global South to access and produce information in balance with that of the rest of the world. In fact, there were few that denied this. There were two ideologically separate but indelibly connected dimensions of the argument for a more “balanced” news flow. One dimension of this was to better the communication networks between nations of the Global South, often termed South-South dialogue. Information gleaned in Tanzania about neighboring Kenya, for example, was likely sourced by a European or American news agency. This was seen as privileging a Western perspective. As Indira Gandhi stated in 1976,

We want to hear Africans on events in Africa. You should similarly be able to get an Indian explanation on events in India. It is astonishing that we know so little about leading poets, novelists, historians and editors of various Asian, African and Latin American countries while we are familiar with minor authors and columnists of Europe and America.⁴⁰

Another dimension focused on bolstering the ability of Third World nations to produce stories for Western consumption. As Resolution 4/19 of the Twenty-first Session of the Unesco General Conference notes, “The General Conference considers ... the right of each nation to inform the world about its interests, its aspirations and its social and cultural values; respect for the right of

⁴⁰ Quoted by Louis Edward Inglehart, in *Press Freedoms: A descriptive calendar of concepts, interpretations, events, and court actions, from 4000 BC to the present*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1987), 355.

all peoples to participate in international exchanges of information on the basis of equality, justice, and mutual benefit.”⁴¹ It was thought that through this change in structure, not only would the nations of the Global South be improved, but also the more information-rich countries of the West. With locally cultivated knowledge, written for a global audience, the West would purportedly have more accurate information about the rest of the world at hand. This was seen as an integral element to NWICO. For a while, though, as these were just suggestions and conversations, they mattered little for actually improving the ability for Third World nations to produce stories on an equal footing with other nations of the globe.

The rapid, almost dizzying pace at which technology was developing on the global stage in the decades after World War II was seen to benefit only a few nations, and limit many, in the production of expedient, reliable and readable news stories. As a group of media experts noted in 1980, “as telegrams lessened in importance to the Press and the telephone and telex took their place, the tradition of Press preferences began to fade. But there is strong evidence that many people in government all over the world are ready to reverse the process because of their conviction that their people’s right to know must not be obstructed by financial obstacles to the transmission of international news.”⁴² In other words, the rapid improvements of technology - “financial obstacles” - were seen to be holding certain areas of the globe from adequately producing and accessing information in pace with the West. This imbalance was not only imagined as harmful to local populations within nations, however, but rather the broad “national image” of these countries on the global stage. In other words, as the final report of the “Foreign Images” study, undertaken by Unesco in 1985 noted:

⁴¹ Resolution 4/19, Twenty-first Session of the Unesco General Conference, Belgrade, 1980.

⁴² Kaarle Nordenstreng, *Foreign News in the Media: International Reporting in 29 Countries* (with Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi et al.). Paris: Unesco Reports and Papers on Mass Communication, 93/1985.

Since the news media are important arbiters of reality, not only at the mass level but also amongst decision-makers, distorted images of the international scene could be a major obstacle for those trying to solve the problems between North and South. It was, in fact, the oft-expressed concern at the way in which the different 'worlds' portray each other through their news presentations, as well as the way in which development issues were covered by the media, that prompted the research effort which is reported in these pages.⁴³

Therefore, the confrontation that took place over news imbalances in the 1970s and 1980s was viewed to be about far more than just the ability to inform and be informed. The media, rather than being merely descriptive, was imagined to be constructive and potentially destructive.

The Non Aligned News Agencies Pool envisioned itself as a practical attempt to ameliorate the perceived imbalances in news flow. As Kaarle Nordenstreng notes,

[I]t should be recalled that the non-aligned program was by no means limited to attacks on Western 'media imperialism' and to concern about the political content of the mass media. It was also a concerted program for establishing the technical and practical means for communication in and among the developing countries. Thus, the non-aligned program for a new information order *both* came into conflict with the traditional Western approach on the values and principles involved *and* was in harmony with the tactical moves that had been made by some Western delegations at the General Conferences since 1972 aimed at turning attention away from normative consideration of media contents to technical consideration of media infrastructures.⁴⁴

The Pool was therefore constructed to be a non-market media institution that was intended to complement, not supplement news from the "big five." Although the private sector of many newly independent countries was relatively meek, the state often had funds at its disposal. As the *MacBride Report* put it, "we must not ignore the fact that the establishment of a new order will bring major transformations in national as well as international structures of communication.

Designed to meet the basic needs of the poorer sections of the world," this vision "presupposes a

⁴³ Kaarle Nordenstreng, *Foreign News in the Media*, 93/1985.

⁴⁴ Nordenstreng Kaarle and Lauri Hannikainen. *The mass media declaration of UNESCO*. (Praeger Pub Text, 1984), 103.

new distribution of available resources in accordance with their vital rights and needs.”⁴⁵ Access to information was certainly a dimension of this critique, but also was production. As Mustapha Masmoudi, a member of the MacBride Commission, noted in 1978:

Fundamentally linked to the other rights, the right to communicate concerns not only the individual but also groups, nations and societies, and must be given appropriate expression at the international level, in relations between states, nations, societies and cultures. Furthermore, the right to communicate should guarantee not only the right to be informed but also its corollary, the right to inform, to complete mutilated information and to correct false information.⁴⁶

As is clear from this quote, the critique went beyond access to information. Masmoudi, couching his position in the language of human rights, articulated the belief in having equal access to produce information. In this vein, the non-Western world was at a distinct market disadvantage.

The Non Aligned News Agencies Pool was envisioned to function largely outside of the private market, operating among national news agencies of participating nations in the Non Aligned Movement. Importantly, then, this News Pool was implicitly guided by a stronger faith and support of national, as opposed to private, news agencies.⁴⁷ This strategy hinged, then, upon strengthening national news agencies, as this was far more practical than relying on often fledgling private spheres. This was also the reason for establishing a cooperative “news pool” model. “Developing countries’ news agencies ... frequently lack a developed infrastructure, and relying as they must on local clients or government subsidy, generally do not have the financial resources to expand their international news arrangements... One important way in which this

⁴⁵ Ibid, 39.

⁴⁶ Mustapha Masmoudi “The New World Information Order,” *International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems*, 31 Public, 1978.

⁴⁷ The reason for this was not nominally a distrust of ‘capitalism’ or the global market economy; instead, it was merely practical. Newly independent nations could not muster the resources to create the sophisticated and expensive news structures required to compete with the transnational news giants like Reuters and Associated Press.

situation can be improved is for national news agencies to extend the distribution of their own news through bilateral or multilateral agreements with other news agencies or news pools.”⁴⁸

NANAP was headed by Tanjug, a Yugoslav news agency, and supported by many diverse members of the Non Aligned Movement. This cooperative press institution could trace its ideological lineage to at least the year 1955, when Unesco (along with the International Telecommunications Union) was requested by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations to investigate the problems or obstacles to a more free flow of information between nations. The then Director General of Unesco wrote in the 1956 Unesco publication, “The Problems of Transmitting Press Messages,” that

While much has been achieved, much remains to be done to assure the fully effective use of telecommunication for the international transmission of news. The many technical advances now being made in telecommunication throughout the world offer an unrivaled opportunity for international cooperation to remove obstacles to news transmission. Past experience has shown that intern-governmental action in this field can be useful and effective.⁴⁹

Although this was stated in 1955, little was done beyond mere words to ameliorate such imbalances. It was not until members of the Non Aligned Movement met in Lima, in 1975, that calls were made to challenge these obstacles head-on. One of the main points of contention at this meeting were the high costs of telecommunication tariffs. Indeed, the working group meeting in Paris of 1980 confirmed that “one important way in which this situation can be improved is for national news agencies to extend the distribution of their own news through bilateral or multilateral agreements with other news agencies or news pools.”⁵⁰ The Non Aligned News Pool constituted one such institution, and Tanjug was agreed to be its center of operations.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁹ Report of the Working Group on International Telecommunication Tariffs, Third Meeting, Paris, June 26-27, 1980. UNESCO Archive.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Tanjug was, in relation to the five giants, a small news agency. This did not, however, prevent it from becoming increasingly relevant throughout the 1960s. Despite the increasingly competitive nature of global news, Tanjug was able to become increasingly well-known on the global stage due to its ability to report first on significant events.⁵¹ From the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, a coup in Chile, to the Bay of Pigs invasion, Tanjug - a small Yugoslav news agency - was consistently the first to break the news, even beating out Reuters and Associated Press.⁵² Therefore, Tanjug was seemingly well poised in 1975 to head the News Pool due to its surprising ability to break large news stories without the large infrastructure of a transnational news agency.

NANAP was a transnational cooperative institution which functioned on the mutual trust granted it by the members of the Non Aligned Movement.⁵³ The Pool disseminated news stories internally between member nations - translating the stories into four languages, French, Spanish, Arabic and English. It was designed to both increase the communication between Third World countries, and counter the reputed cultural imperialism by the West (and, to a lesser extent, by the Soviets), not by directly exposing it nor by combatting it intellectually in the halls of the UN; this happened later, largely independently of the Pool. Instead, it was designed to be a practical way to increase communication among member nations outside of the global marketplace.⁵⁴ At the Ministerial Conference of Nonaligned Countries on the Press Agencies Pool in New Delhi in July of 1976, it was noted that “Non aligned countries have few means, in the present situation,

⁵¹ Vukasovich, Christian, and Oliver Boyd-Barrett. "Whatever happened to Tanjug? Re-loading memory for an understanding of the global news system." *International Communication Gazette* 74, no. 8 (2012), 700.

⁵² Ibid, 699.

⁵³ Unesco, *Communication and Society: A Documentary History of a New World Information and Communication Order seen as an Evolving and Continuing Process 1975-1986*. 10 October 1988.

⁵⁴ Christian Vukasovich, Oliver Boyd-Barrett, “Whatever happened to Tanjug? Re-loading memory for an understanding of the global news system,” *International Communication Gazette* 74, no. 8 (2012): 693-710.

to know about each other, except through the channel of the existing international news media and new centres, their own news media being mainly underdeveloped or developed for want of required resources.”

Many Western newspapers launched critique from the position that NANAP was attempting to close off the Western gaze, constructing borders to inhibit the “free flow of news.” A simple reexamination of the Pool presents the opposite aim: to increase the flow of information, albeit with necessary governmental assistance. The Pool was not meant to work in place of the transnational news agencies. In fact, the Pool could not have functioned without reprinting the wholesale news derived from the “big five.” Instead, it was meant to complement, work alongside these agencies, to increase the flow of news. As chairman Hifzi Topuz argued, “Despite the campaigns directed against the Pool, it has proved that it does not constitute a competitive but rather a complementary system to the international agencies. The creation and development of the Pool has not restricted the international agencies in carrying out their activities.”⁵⁵ The focus on strengthening national news agencies stemmed not from ideological motives, but from the significant economic obstacles facing the establishment of private news agencies in a postcolonial world. At the Fourth Meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool, held in Belgrade in November 1979, the Chairman noted that fifty to sixty national news agencies were operating within the Pool system despite political opposition and economic obstacles. At this meeting, the chairman underlined a significant aim of

⁵⁵ Hifzi Topuz, “United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Meeting of Experts on the Development of News Agencies in Asia,” Colombo 5-9, December, 1977. Page 3. UNESCO Archive, CC/77/Conf.606/7, page 7.

the News Pool at the very end of the tumultuous decade of the 1970s: “the need [to establish] an integral telecommunications system which would include all the non-aligned agencies.”⁵⁶

Tanjug, a smaller news agency in relation to the five media giants, relied on three main sources for its news reporting in the 1970s. First, it used its own staff of foreign correspondents, which numbered forty-seven in April 1977. It had staff present in each continent. Second, and importantly, it used the foreign news agencies, including of course the five transnational news agencies but also over sixty other national news agencies. This was not unusual, as even the “big five” commonly used stories of other international news agencies, depending on which agency happened to be the one to produce the “scoop.”⁵⁷ In other words, the Yugoslav press could never provide the scope and detail of international news coverage that it did without the use of the transnational news agencies.⁵⁸ And thirdly, it made use of the foreign press, along with radio news.⁵⁹

Simply put, a news agency became a participant of the News Pool when it transmitted a news report to one or more of the Pool’s “collector-distributor” agencies. Each news agency that participates in the Pool would select a story to send to the brain of the Pool in Tanjug for redistribution. The redistributing agency would then translate all of these stories into the languages of French, Spanish, Arabic and English. In 1978, Tanjug redistributed a six-hour daily total of news to the member news agencies of the Pool.⁶⁰ Tanjug operated as an international

⁵⁶ Indian Institute of Mass Communication, “News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries: A Perspective, (New Delhi: Institute of Mass Communication, 1983), 194.

⁵⁷ To see an overview of transnational news practice, see: Donald Read, *The power of news: the history of Reuters*. (Oxford University Press, USA, 1999).

⁵⁸ Pero Ivacic, “The Flow of News: Tanjug, the Pool, and the National Agencies,” *World Communication* (New York: Praeger, 1978). 158.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 160.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 161.

news cooperative that was open to any member of the Non Aligned Movement. In 1975, the year of its inception, the member news agencies numbered twelve. One short year later, this number shot up to forty news agencies. The next three years, its growth saw a modest increase to fifty-two members by 1979. Interestingly, though, throughout the most politically charged years of its operation - from 1977-1981 - its membership grew to a staggering eighty-three members.⁶¹ 1980 marked a landmark year in the trajectory of the News Pool, however, as the debate which had been brewing in the United Nations culminated in the publication of the long-awaited *MacBride Report*. The next section of this chapter focuses on this important piece, which ultimately lent support to the mission of the News Pool and its operation.

The Publication of the *MacBride Report*

In his 2004 introduction to *Many Voices, One World*, the commercially published version of what had been previously known as *The MacBride Report*, Andrew Calabrese notes that this report stands as something we should all continue to honor as “it was the first comprehensive modern attempt to define an international code of communication rights in terms of human rights.” He fails to consider, however, that this very document was produced by a committee called for in 1975 by Unesco director general, Amadou M’Bow, to investigate the limits and merits of this very rhetoric. In other words, by unproblematically conflating the free flow of news with universal human rights, and denying the very political and specifically historical nature of both of these concepts, Calabrese severely misses the point. By introducing this provocative and seminal document as a landmark in the pursuit of “discovering” universal

⁶¹ Indian Institute of Mass Communication, “News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries: A Perspective, (New Delhi: Institute of Mass Communication, 1983).

human rights, Calabrese denies that this piece may have actually stood as an obstacle to that problematic discourse.

But if we can think past the Report's flaws and the controversies that surrounded its public reception in 1980, we can read from it a spirit that continues to motivate fruitful dialogue about communication problems and that appeals to widespread and fundamental ideas about how the means of communication are fundamental tools of democratic self-governance.⁶²

On the contrary. Instead of looking past the controversies, this document should be, rather, mired in those problematics. Only then is it possible to understand the importance of the piece. The critique of international media sought to take what was then understood as a universal set of criteria - the free press dictated by a wider market economy - and emphasize the very political nature of this discourse. What Calabrese is suggesting, rather blindly, is to take the politics and discourses which this document emphasizes, such as: cable costs, cultural and social differences, an imbalanced market and global inequalities between global North and South, Western duplicity regarding the limitations of market media, and distill this ideological mess, or "rambling document," back again into the apolitical arena, or "spirit of hopefulness" surrounding human rights itself. Here, respecting the more historically accurate "spirit" of the document, I intend to do the opposite of what Calabrese suggests. This document, produced by "wise men"⁶³ hand-chosen chosen by Amadou M'Bow to investigate the veracity of Third World claims against the West, is important because it blends together both normative and structural elements of this confrontation. At the Unesco Conference in Nairobi in 1976, director general Amadou M'Bow was instructed by the General Conference to

... undertake a review of all the problems of communication in contemporary society seen against the background of technological progress and recent developments in

⁶² Sean MacBride, *Many voices, one world: Towards a new, more just, and more efficient world information and communication order*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004). xiv.

⁶³ It is important to note that there was not a single woman represented on the commission.

international relations with due undertaking this task, to set up a ‘brains trust’ composed of highly competent, prominent figures from various backgrounds, and [he] accordingly established the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, under the presidency of Mr. Sean MacBride...⁶⁴

Noticeable from this small quote, this committee was anything but apolitical. Neither, in fact, was its head actor - Sean MacBride.

Having established the political nature of this debate, and the seriousness with which it should be dealt, the Unesco commission took to investigating the merits of this Third World critique. Under MacBride, the committee itself was composed of: Eli Abel (United States), Hubert Beuve-Mery (France), Elebe Ma Ekonzo (Zaire), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia), Sergei Losev (USSR), Mochtar Lubis (Indonesia), Mustapha Masmoudi (Tunisia), Michio Nagai (Japan), Fred Isaac Akporuaro Omu (Nigeria), Bogdan Osolnik (Yugoslavia), Gamal el Oteifi (Egypt), Johannes Pieter Pronk (Netherlands), Juan Somavia (Chile), George Boobli Verghese (India), and Betty Zimmerman (Canada). It becomes clear from the recorded minutes of the MacBride Commission that there existed sharp disagreement among the members of this committee. Nevertheless, they proposed a final document to director general Amadou M’Bow in 1980 which stands, almost, as a united front. *The Report* certainly took on a life of its own. The committee took seriously the immensity of its task, leading to the full volume publication of the *MacBride Report* which touched on the imbalance of news flow, responsibility and freedom of the press, governments and transnationals, the individual and collective right to communicate, impact of technologies, links between communication and education, to cite a few named by MacBride himself. “From the beginning we have been aware of [*The Report’s*] immensity. And still, as the work progresses, new insights enlarge our horizon, new problems present themselves,

⁶⁴ Amadou M’Bow, foreword to: *Many Voices, One World*, xviii.

new concerns pre-occupy our minds.”⁶⁵ This document was immense in both size and scope. Certainly outdoing Amadou M’Bow’s expectations, MacBride and his committee tackled the issue with great focus and seriousness. This document, ultimately, shifted the entire tone and direction of the international debate as it proved that Western members of the United Nations were willing to hear, even agree with, vocal criticism of the United States.

“Probably the major phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century,” the introduction of the *Report* provocatively stated, “has been the accession to independence of almost eighty nations, thanks to which over two billion people have been liberated from colonial domination.” However, “there can be no genuine, effective independence without the communication resources needed to safeguard it. The argument has been made that a nation whose mass media are under foreign domination cannot claim to be a nation.”⁶⁶ The argument has been made, and it seems that the committee is in nearly full agreement with this pronouncement. “The crucial question,” *The Report* continues, “is whether there exists the political will to overcome the factors which can be recognised as obstacles.”⁶⁷ The political will certainly existed among the members of this committee, as the remainder of the document was devoted “to consider in practical terms the challenges we have to face and the ways in which we might act in concert to meet them, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Declaration on the media unanimously adopted by the General Conference at its twentieth session in 1978.”⁶⁸ In short, the committee recognized early the need to address political problems associated with

⁶⁵ Statement by Mr. Sean MacBride, S.C. at the public inaugural session of the meeting of the international commission for the study of communication problems held in New Delhi on 26 March, 1979.

⁶⁶ Sean MacBride, *Many Voices, One World: Towards a new, more just, and more efficient world information and communication order*, 34.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, xix.

mass media, as emphasized above, in practical terms. The next section, and remainder of the chapter, is devoted to focusing these findings.

The Findings of the Report

Part I of *The MacBride Report* focused on “communication in society,” while Part II considered “communication today.” These were gestural, broadly focused theoretical sections, of little direct importance for this research. Part III, however, entitled “Problems and Issues of Common Concern,” sought to address, in practical terms, the specific issues facing the world of media as they saw it. It was short, effective, and to the point. In the introduction to this section, the committee writes:

“While communication has been improved and amplified within almost every nation, there has also been some improvement in the conditions of international exchange of information and in the balance and diversity of its content, which is at the core of the debate on problems of communication. Also, as the world debate has proceeded, there has been some advance in the dialogue and mutual understanding among the protagonists.

Unsolved problems, nevertheless, remain, and it is now our task to examine them, to consider the factors involved and the possible lines of development, and thus to move toward solutions. To place the emphasis on the difficulties, inconsistencies and imbalances still evident in the world of communication inevitably means presenting a picture in dark tones. But this is only a reflection of the truth that the complexity of the problems increases even while the instruments for solving them are being developed and perfected.⁶⁹

Although it took almost one hundred and thirty five pages of text to get there, the committee devoted this third part to outlining the serious problems facing non-Western nations, and indeed the now “globalized” world, in a new technological, postcolonial age. This part was divided into five main sections, each devoted to one perceived problem.

⁶⁹ Sean MacBride, *Many Voices, One World: Towards a new, more just, and more efficient world information and communication order*, 135.

The first section was devoted to examining flaws and imbalances in the flow of communication. This was of especial importance, as the rhetoric surrounding “imbalanced” and “free” flow of news was probably the most exercised phrasing of the international debate.

Knowing full well that the Third World has been criticized for impeding or rejecting article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the committee confronted this head on.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to *hold* opinions without interference and to *seek, receive* and *impart* information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers’ ... The whole post-war period has been a time of struggle for the implementation of this right.⁷⁰

The committee deemed that, while the right to receive information had been over-emphasized, the right to impart and seek information have been frequently neglected. In other words, while the industrialized nations have painstakingly focused on the right to protect a “free flow of information” into all nations, “power centres in the communication world are trespassing on the full rights of the individual,” by throttling the non-Western world in its ability to produce information.⁷¹ The language used here was an attempt to deflect claims that media critics were trammeling individual human rights. Much of the section seeks to diffuse further critique, by focusing in detail on non-structural elements of this abuse of rights. Censorship, physical violence against journalists, as well as “harassment, detention, torture, kidnapping, murder, bomb attacks.”⁷² There are also non-violent limitations imposed on the mobility of journalists which may not fall under the umbrella of “human rights.” The realities of violence do not discount the “thornier issue” of access to news production. These include “granting of visas, restriction of journalists’ movements, limitations on persons or offices as contracts for newsmen,

⁷⁰ Ibid, 137.

⁷¹ Ibid, 137.

⁷² Ibid, 138.

withdrawal of accreditation or expulsion from the country that governments may heavily restrict the flow of news.”⁷³ There are also regulations, restrictions, and obstacles to the flow of news which are even less visible. These, however, will be discussed more closely in the “democratization” section.

Further, the committee tackles head-on the duplicitous concept of “free flow.” This is notably a normative digression by the committee. “Despite many disputes about the validity of such criticisms it seems irrefutable that ‘free flow’ between the strong and the weak, the haves and the have-nots has had undesirable consequences for the latter, and hence at the international level for the developing countries.”⁷⁴ For the flow of information to be truly “free,” the committee argues, information flow must be a discourse, a two-way flow. The non-Western world must be given more access, they claim, to producing news and information. The news and information disseminated to the non-Western world, also, must be of a less cursory, and more useful, type. There is a specific information imbalance that is producing a more imbalanced world. More technically, the

uneven geographical distribution of data banks and the practically monopolistic use of a large amount of computerised information by a limited number of privileged consumers, is at the origin of demands from developing countries for a freer flow of scientific, technical and commercial data.⁷⁵

There is little circulation of this technical type of information. This further widens the gap, according to the committee, as few privileged nations and nationals are in possession of data in an increasingly data-driven world. This supposedly leads, further, to a gap in professionalism and material. This is burdening initiatives such as the “News Agency Pool of Non-Aligned Countries

⁷³ Ibid, 139.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 142.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 144.

and the Inter Press Service,” which have “been limited to an extent in some industrialized countries by a lack of response and utilization of their news and broadcasting service. Incoming news from many developing countries does not always readily flow into the media in the industrialized world.”⁷⁶

The second issue the committee dubbed “dominance in communication content.” This problem, as can be surmised, focused on national imbalances and cultural differences associated with the flows of information. This subsection focused on the supposed “distortion” of media content,” which not only concerned the accuracy of news, but also the definition of news and news values as they may differ between communities. Many critique that emphasis is not on context, nor true understanding, when writing a media story, but mere presentation, “as objectively as possible,” of facts. These could certainly, while presenting no misinformation, certainly distort or misconvey as development. The increased speed, and therefore effect, of media has resulted in certain harmful effects, as the committee observes. The introduction of new technologies and media “into traditional societies has seldom failed to shake centuries-old customs, time-honoured cultural practices and simple lifestyles, social aspirations and economic patterns.”⁷⁷ It is for this reason, the authors assert, that media has a responsibility as well as a function in society.

“Because communication is a part of culture as much as an influence upon it,” the authors continue, “the development of a national communication system can help to foster a thriving national culture.”⁷⁸ The committee suggests that two opposed views, in this vein, should be enmeshed. One view, the idea that outdated and unuseful “traditional” practices should very well

⁷⁶ Ibid, 147.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 160.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 161.

be dissuaded by a modern, invasive, media. The other view sees news media as insidious “assassins” of traditional culture. In order to enmesh these two views, the authors suggest that language, for example, be more closely taken into account. The committee cites that governments, concerned with the loss of “traditional” cultural values, have established policies to protect these activities or values. This is not, they claim, solely a Third World concern. Many nations in the “industrialized world” have been concerned with outside influence. Ultimately, the committee suggests that, “to remain alive, genuinely popular, and attractive, these [cultural] forms must be constantly renewed by fresh talent and fresh content.”⁷⁹ In other words, local aspects of society need to legitimize, possibly transform themselves, to survive.

The next problem they tackle, and possibly the most important, is the “democratization of communication.” This section studied closely the barriers to communication production and access. The high cost of cables and tariffs surrounding satellite transmissions represented, perhaps, the most significant problem facing nations of the non-Western world. Newly independent nations of the Global South, however, found themselves facing a media industry largely dictated by the market and controlled by foreign companies within their borders. As the committee notes: “But one barrier that exists almost everywhere is the structure of vertical communication, where the flow runs from top to bottom, where the few talk to the many about the needs and problems of the many from the standpoint of the few.”⁸⁰ These problems include the “non-existence of basic facilities for communication, ... lack of infrastructures, lack of communications systems, and lack of production facilities.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid, 164.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 168.

⁸¹ Ibid, 168.

Essentially, the commercial tariffs placed on international communication were seen as hamstringing, disproportionately, nations of the Global South. At a meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1979, attended by twenty-three delegates from Asian nations, argued that putting in place a “special low tariff” would be a “precondition for establishing a larger and more balanced flow of news.”⁸² Indeed, the working group of experts⁸³ for Unesco that met in Paris in June of 1980 discussed these problems at length. They write, “Developing countries news agencies, however, frequently lack developed infrastructure, and relying as they must on local clients or government subsidy, generally do not have the financial resources to expand their international news arrangements.”⁸⁴ They continue, stating that “In all cases, a major obstacle to achieving a better balanced flow of news has been the high costs of international news transmissions.” Alongside the News Pool, in fact, the Ministers of Information and Communication in New Delhi proposed, in July of 1976, that non aligned governments “introduce suitable and concessional tariff structures for the fast flow of information among non-aligned countries.”⁸⁵ In 1980, for example, tariffs through the Conventional Press Bulletin Service averaged one thousand USD per month per terminal. The working group of experts, speaking on behalf of Unesco in 1980, suggest that a ceiling be put in place at two hundred dollars a month. This cost “is as much as news agencies, newspapers and broadcasting organizations in most developing countries can possibly afford,” they argue.⁸⁶

⁸² Report of the Working Group on International Telecommunication Tariffs, Third Meeting, Paris, June 26-27, 1980. UNESCO Archive.

⁸³ This group of experts consisted of: Chairman Oliver Robinson (London), Pierre Brunel-Lantenac (Geneva), L. Burtz (Geneva), Issiaka Tao (Abidjan), Esmond Wickramasinghe (Colombo).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Similar to the remedy discussed in the last section, the “vertical flow” of information needed to be replaced with a more inclusive media system. With a more democratized, inclusive media arrangement, for example, “alternative” and local communication systems, such as the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool, can help balance the flow of news. The democratization of the news

means broader access to existing media by the general public; but access is only a part of the democratization process. It also means broader possibilities for nations, political forces, cultural communities, economic entities, and social groups to interchange information on a more equal footing, without dominance over the weaker partners and without discrimination against anyone.⁸⁷

In other words, an change in view was required as well as in structure. The Right to Communicate, seemingly apolitical, is not adequately enforced, held the committee. “Today, the struggle still goes on for extending human rights in order to make the world of communications more democratic than it is today.” Rather than skirting the issue, one which seemed to be a trump card against transforming the global news media structures, MacBride and the committee embraced the notion of human rights. In fact, staying true to his work for which he was granted the Nobel Prize, MacBride asserted that human rights are not being observed in the present case. “It will be required to recognize - or not - the existence of a possible new human right, one to be added to, not substituted for, those that have already been declared.”⁸⁸ This was, importantly, adding these somewhat clunky rights to the list of human rights:

The right to assemble, a right to discuss, a right to participate and related *association* rights; a right to inquire, a right to be informed, a right to inform, and related *information* rights; and a right to culture, a right to choose, a right to privacy, and related human development rights...⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *The MacBride Report*, 173.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 173.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 173.

In short, in this important section, MacBride and the committee turned the logic of human rights on its head by asserting that the United States was not upholding its commitment to their observation. In short, human rights were not being safeguarded or respected.

Importantly, this section asserts that the imbalances between the global North and the South is not a “mere matter of a time lag... This points to needs which go beyond the need for assistance: the elimination of unjust and oppressive structures, the revision of the present division of labour, the building of a new international economic order.”⁹⁰ Here, the committee makes a direct stand against the use of economic aid for diffusing critique. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the Third World critique of media structures resulting in the United States offering increased aid and professional training to have non-Western nations play “catch-up.” This side-stepped the critique while diffusing and muting the critics. The committee asserts that “communication reflects the disparities which characterizes the entire international scene, and therefore stands in need of equally far-reaching changes.”⁹¹ In short, communication and information structures are in desperate need of transformation to produce a more equal world.

Finally, “the whole issue of human rights is intimately bound up with all the major problems facing mankind.”⁹² It seems that human rights discourse finds its way in almost each of these subheadings. The media, in this case, can play an important role, according to the committee, in inspiring a “recognition of the need for an active, responsible morality based on law, justice and respect for men and women.” Therefore, “it would be useful for journalists to be

⁹⁰ Ibid, 183.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, 187.

trained in a way that enables them to play their part more effectively” in the arena of human rights.⁹³

⁹³ Ibid, 189, 188.

Chapter 3:

The Reagan Administration Strikes Back: the Rise of the Neoliberals and the Withdrawal from Unesco

The United States utilized a two-part strategy to control, and later end, the call for NWICO. Firstly, the Carter administration focused on a defensive “Marshall Plan” approach to addressing media imbalances from 1976-1980. This was done by offering aid, both in the form of funding and training, to organizations and nations looking to increase the free flow of information. This strategy was characterized by actively engaging in the confrontation in order to tone down or delay changes in the status quo. In other words, this response prioritized deflecting or delaying change through accommodation. A significant element of this path was supporting the MacBride Commission, as it represented a group of “wise-men” who were investigating the veracity of Third World claims. More importantly, its impressive and broad scope was time-consuming, ultimately delaying the confrontation at hand. Further, this angle hinged upon the practical, as opposed to theoretical, side of this debate. Similar to the Marshall Plan after World War II, it aimed to improve infrastructure above all. For the media debate, this meant the training of journalists, improving media facilities, and reducing tariffs. The success of this strategy is best demonstrated by looking closely at the Mass Media Declaration of 1978, which had been pursued by Unesco and the Third World since as early as 1972. This strategy seemed unable, however, to contain the growing dissatisfaction and impatience of many Third World states, despite Western victories such as the Mass Media Declaration. The Reagan administration made a concerted shift away from the more defensive “Marshall Plan” to an aggressive offensive strategy. The Reagan administration, with the help of the ascending neoliberals who distrusted

redistributive planning, employed a more vigorously hostile campaign against Unesco and the Third World by emphasizing the inappropriate “politicization” of the agency. This strategy can best be understood as “withdrawal,” and it took place from 1980-1985. In contrast to the “Marshall Plan,” it was thought that the best way to defend market interests world-wide would be to actively shut down, rather than take part in, any discussions regarding the imbalances in the media. Any efforts to discuss normative or ideological elements of this debate were not to be tolerated. The state would have no place in balancing the flow of information, including a collection of states at the international level. As a commodity, information required deregulation. Therefore, at the same time the United States began disengaging with the debate over international media, it continued to offer financial assistance to private efforts of improving the flow of media. Its point was made clear: the flow of news was not under the purview of the state.

It is important to note that for neoliberals, it was not the idea of a powerful nation-state itself that was contrary to their mission. Instead, it was the very idea of employing a politically enclosed nation-state for enacting redistributive programs that was threatening to the Hayekian order espoused by Reagan. Indeed, as Quinn Slobodian notes, “it is sometimes claimed that the main sleight of hand for neoliberals is to hide the state, but even a cursory reading of the main theorists show that a positive vision for the state is everywhere. The main thing the Geneva School neoliberals hide is not the state but asymmetries of power.”⁹⁴ In other words, it was not the place of the state to balance the international order - whether economic or information orders. For the neoliberals, the idea of states acting on behalf of individuals for social justice could be nothing but counter-productive. This would only lead to more, not less, injustice. Therefore, for

⁹⁴ Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. (Harvard University Press, 2018), 269.

neoliberals, the “free flow of information” was something which - like the economy - must be protected from State interference.

Therefore, this chapter argues that the publication of the *MacBride Report* produced a shift in the West from a passive to an active resistance to NWICO. The Reagan administration’s response to Unesco can be understood by investigating three landmark moments. These include one international meeting, producing a Declaration, and two pieces of domestic legislation. The international meeting took place in Talloires, France, in 1981, and represents the first broad effort by the Reagan administration (and its allies) to make a stand against NWICO. Next, the Quayle/Moynihan Amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which was passed in June of 1981, marks the first Congressional action against the agency. And lastly, this was followed up by the Beard Amendment, passed in September of 1982, which stands as the most significant piece of legislation to be passed throughout this debate. This chapter ultimately argues that the West was successful in, at first delaying, and then containing efforts at change in international media flow. That ultimately, the Third World effort to improve information imbalances on the global stage was precluded by the rise of a new way of thinking.

This first section of this chapter discusses the effort by the Third World bloc within Unesco to pass a broad declaration on the media. By the mid-1970s, it was becoming increasingly clear that the nations of the globe were more interdependent than ever before; the early Cold War demonstrated that something happening in one nation was of immediate relevance to all others. Therefore, within Unesco, delegates from the Third World and the Soviet Union became vocal about producing a unanimously agreed upon document which laid out

shared, universal principles of the media and the profession of journalism. This document would clearly lay out what role the media played in society. Although perhaps early liberals such as Kent Cooper would have lauded such an effort, the delegates from the United States and Great Britain were diametrically opposed to such an effort. The issue was that speaking of the “role” of the media implied some sort of duty, or responsibility, held by journalists to society. Imagining the institution of the media to be a “Fourth Estate,” which checked power, rather than held it, any such effort was thought to be antithetical to a Western concept of the news. Despite this clear disapproval from the start, non-Western nations continued to pursue a document which would clearly stipulate the role, duties, and responsibilities that information institutions held in society. It was not until 1976, however, that this effort became material.

The first effort of putting forth an actual draft declaration came at the 19th Unesco General Conference, which was held from October 26th to November 30th of 1976 in Nairobi, Kenya. At this meeting, the infamous document, 19C/91, was presented to the conference by Director-General Amadou M’Bow. This was a Soviet draft proposal which sought to lay out universal principles of the mass media. This proposal set off a great amount of controversy. Importantly, Director-General Amadou M’Bow had only assumed the head of Unesco in 1975, taking the place of the French Rene Maheu, and was eager to have the first-ever General Conference taking place on African soil go well.⁹⁵ The proposal, which referred to the “responsibility” and “duties” of journalists and media institutions was quickly viewed in Cold War lenses as hostile to the freedom of information. 19C/91 was called the “Draft Declaration on Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace

⁹⁵ George Gerbner, Hamid Mowlana, and Kaarle Nordenstreng, eds. *The Global Media Debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1993), 53.

and International Understanding and to Combating War Propaganda, Racism and Apartheid.”

This proposal had been in the work since 1972, long before the debate itself began over media imbalances. Not everyone, however, had viewed the project of producing a statement on the role and purpose of the international media optimistically. For the Western delegates, any statement which referred to the responsibility or duty of the media was threatening to the very concept of the free flow of information. This became a very controversial moment in the debate, as delegates to Unesco found themselves pitted squarely against one another.

This section focuses on the changes that took place within this document, between the proposal in Nairobi to when officially passed in Paris two years later, to demonstrate the success of the Western “Marshall Plan” approach to the media debate. In 1978, this document became finalized as the “Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Radicalism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.” This is the only official document regarding the mass media ever to be passed by Unesco. However, the language and focus of this declaration changed dramatically between the proposed draft and the final document. In the two years leading up to its eventual passing, three important “alternatives” were presented by members of Unesco: Finland, the United States, and the former Byelorussia. These three “alternative” texts, along with the negotiations taking place under the helm of Amadou M’Bow, came together to produce the compromise passed in 1978.

Importantly, in Paris it was not the Third World delegates who were celebrating the Mass Media Declaration’s passing. It was the “triumphant” Western delegates who were most satisfied with the direction taken by Unesco. Mostly all “theoretical” and “normative” pronouncements

regarding the media had been dropped, leaving only the technical and practical aspects of media transformation standing. Although the West strictly disapproved of any such declaration, it was American, British, and Low Country delegates who were celebrating the moment of its passing. This bittersweet moment for the Third World did not slow critiques, however. The document nevertheless became the center of focus for Third World nations committed to balancing the mass media on the global stage. Kaarle Nordenstreng, then President of the International Organization of Journalists, calls the Declaration “a landmark in the history of journalism and mass communication, demonstrating the unprecedented political attention which mass media issues gained through the world in the 1970s.”⁹⁶

The Nairobi Conference, taking place in Africa in the final months of 1976, represents a key moment in the debate over media imbalances. “The General Conference authorizes the Director-General to continue to implement the programme designed to promote the *free* and *balanced* flow of information and the movement of persons and materials,” the Conference stated. As can be gleaned from this, the issue at hand remained the growing chasm between the words “free” and “balanced” flow of information. It was the infamous document, 19C/91 that inspired the most controversy at the Nairobi Conference. The Conference declared that a group of experts should be called together to investigate the putative imbalances in the international media in the following year. Specifically, the Conference invited the “Director-General to hold further broad consultations with experts with a view to preparing a final Draft Declaration on

⁹⁶ Ibid, 57.

‘Fundamental Principles Governing the Use of the Mass Media in Strengthening Peace and International Understanding and in Combating War Propaganda, Racialism and Apartheid’.⁹⁷

Leonard R. Sussman, then Executive Director of Freedom House, was an American who was in attendance at the Nairobi meeting. Less than a year later, he published an article for *The Washington Papers*, within which he bemoans the call for a New World Information and Communications Order. Sussman was acting not on behalf of the U.S. government, but rather for Freedom House, a neoconservative non-governmental organisation. Focusing on Unesco policies taking place at the Nairobi Conference, Sussman asserts that:

These policies ultimately were recognized by journalists as an imminent threat when the agenda for the Quito meeting was circulated in March 1976. The Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) mounted a campaign to alert delegates to the dangers inherent in the UNESCO discussion papers... Perhaps most ominous of all, the agenda flatly declared: ‘The old notion of the free flow of information must now be extended to include that of the balanced flow of information, which is essential in order that a new, more just international economic order, as defined by resolution 3201 (S-VI) of the United Nations General Assembly, may be brought into being.’ The main thrust of the agenda proposals was clear: ‘a national communication policy is necessary in order to help safeguard national sovereignty.’⁹⁸

In 1977, the year after this debate struck Western consciousness, Sussman postulates that in critiquing the global media within a United Nations organization, the inherent dangers are tantamount to autocracy. He notes that Western journalists “focused next on the biennial conference of Unesco set for Nairobi, Kenya. There, the Soviet draft declaration, 19 C/91, on the ‘use of the mass media’, with its notorious Article XII, would be debated. In preparation, the free-press forces mounted a campaign of resistance ... Representatives of the free press - the International Press Institute, the World Press Freedom Committee, newly formed around the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Leonard Sussman, “Mass News Media and the Third World Challenge,” *The Washington Papers* 46, 21.

IAPA, and others - were at Nairobi to meet informally with Third World delegates.”⁹⁹ This document of course became the famous Mass Media Declaration, after being passed (with Western support) in 1978. However, much would need to be transformed within that document before it could be passed.

The primary concern for Sussman regarded article XII of the Draft Declaration. This article stipulated that “States are responsible for the activities in the international sphere of all mass media under their jurisdiction.”¹⁰⁰ This article alerted many Western observers, namely from Canada, the United States, and the nine nations which made up the European Economic Community.¹⁰¹ Each of these nations, in their response to the Declaration, admitted to structural and economic obstacles which resulted in an imbalanced media. Yet each emphasized the need to downplay radical alternatives, and push for gradual change. “It was true that the developing countries had special problems that called for attention from communication experts,” the United States delegate admitted, “But this required calm and rational examination as a first step.”¹⁰² The Western delegates were especially concerned with State autonomy over the media. As the delegate from the United States asserted, “The draft Declaration in document 19C/91 reflected the view that the mass media should serve the interests of the State not those of the citizen as an individual, and that they must therefore be under the control of the state.” Further, dealing in slippery slopes, the U.S. delegate stated that “Freedom of expression and freedom of the news

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ “Draft Declaration on Fundamental Principles Governing the Use of the Mass Media in Strengthening Peace and International Understanding and in Combating War Propaganda, Racism and Apartheid,” Prepared by Intergovernmental M of Experts held at Unesco, Paris, 15-22 December 1975, and presented by the Director-General to the 19th session of the General Conference, Nairobi, October-November 1976. (Unesco document 19C/91, 1 July 1976.

¹⁰¹ These were Belgium, France, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

¹⁰² “Summary of Interventions made in Programme Commission III” at the 19th session of the General Conference, Nairobi, November 1976. (Unesco document CC.77/WS/21, April 1977).

meddai were fundamental to all other freedoms. If they were lost, or shackled by Unesco's moral sanction, the next to go might well be academic freedom, freedom of scientific enquiry, freedom to enjoy cultural diversity."¹⁰³ The Western delegates, in short, were worried about State control over information. They attempted to shift the focus away from theoretical, radical changes in the media, by emphasizing gradual solutions.

Sussman, for his part, was particularly concerned with one structural attempt to ameliorate the imbalances in the international media: the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool. "The constitution - following Mrs. Gandhi's opening remarks - suggests that whatever one government news agency says about its country must be regarded as 'correct and factual'. This premise is further supported by the [Non Aligned News] pool's pledge to relay, unedited and unaltered, dispatches received from a national news agency."¹⁰⁴ Sussman quotes from Roger Tatarian, the former editor of UPI, to provide a "litmus test for news and news agencies." He quotes: "It is well to recall that there are two broad currents in the global stream of information. One is news, the other propaganda."¹⁰⁵ "Many in the Third World," he argues, "do not seem to understand or accept a basic premise of Western journalism: the commitment of a free press to report facts does not establish the desirability of the facts or an intention to duplicate the fact-situation elsewhere."¹⁰⁶ Ronald F. Stowe, an American delegate to the Nairobi meeting in 1976, who was, according to Sussman, "refused permission to explain to the Unesco meeting his reasons for withdrawing," quickly called a "press conference in an adjacent hallway" and stated that:

¹⁰³ "Summary of Interventions made in Programme Commission III" at the 19th session of the General Conference, Nairobi, November 1976. (Unesco document CC.77/WS/21, April 1977).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 32.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 34.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 35.

There are fundamental differences which separate those who believe in an independent mass media essentially free from government control, from those who believe that the mass media should be a tool of the state. Those differences cannot be eliminated or reconciled here.¹⁰⁷

However, it is interesting to note that by 1978, it was not the Western nations, but non-Western, who were most disappointed with the Mass Media Declaration. Between the Nairobi and Paris Conferences, great amendments had been made to the Declaration, disappointing those who supported the call for a “new world order.”

The Mass Media Declaration

On November 22, 1978, one hundred and forty-six member states came together to hold the twentieth General Conference of Unesco in Paris, France. At this meeting, the declaration on Mass Media was officially passed, greeted with “thunderous applause” and a standing ovation by delegates attending the Conference.¹⁰⁸ The motion was named the “Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid, and Incitement to War.” Even the chief American delegate in attendance called it a “triumph of the spirit of goodwill and international cooperation.”¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, however, although two years prior it was the American and British delegates who were dissatisfied with the direction taken by Unesco in pursuing this declaration, in 1978 it was non-Western nations who expressed the most disappointment. This was likely due to the fact that most references that

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 19. Quoting (Stowe, 1976).

¹⁰⁸ George Gerbner, Hamid Mowlana, and Kaarle Nordenstreng, eds. *The Global Media Debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1993), 112.

¹⁰⁹ George Gerbner, *The Global Media Debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1993). Quoted by Gerbner, page 112.

were unsavory to Western observers were stripped from the document, despite the fact that these were the most important aspects of the original document. Indeed, Leonard Sussman, a leading contemporary voice against NWICO and then head of Freedom House, declared that the Americans and Westerners “were greatly relieved that the final text had eliminated almost all objectionable concepts... the formulation carefully skirts any direct stipulations, but does not eliminate the inference that governments can set agendas for the *content* of mass media declarations.”¹¹⁰ In short, “Unesco’s declaration on the mass news media - unanimously approved in November by 146 countries - was the least objectionable of a series of bad alternatives.”¹¹¹ This “least objectionable” version was regarded as a solid victory for the Americans and a clear defeat for those calling for a “new world order” in information.

At the passing of the declaration, many delegates were given a chance to speak on behalf of the document. The delegate from Jamaica, an active supporter of the Non-Aligned movement, presented a response that embodied the feeling shared by most non-Western nations:

The delegation of Jamaica has accepted the compromise text contained in the revised draft Declaration on the Mass Media submitted to us by the Director-General but, quite frankly, it has done so somewhat reluctantly. We have accepted this compromise primarily because of our desire to maintain the solidarity of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Group - an objective to which my Government attaches great importance - rather than because of real satisfaction with the text of the declaration.

This was a common response by delegates representing member states of the Global South. It was because of a felt duty towards one other rather than a genuine approval that this document was passed at all. The delegate expressed that had the original document been voted upon - the one which had caused so much consternation among Western delegates two years before -

¹¹⁰ George Gerbner, Hamid Mowlana, and Kaarle Nordenstreng, eds. *The Global Media Debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1993).

¹¹¹ Leonard Sussman, “Unesco’s Declaration - Best of Bad Alternatives,” *Freedom at Issue* 49, (New York: 1979) in Kaarle Nordenstreng and Lauri Hannikainen. *The mass media declaration of UNESCO*. (Praeger Pub Text, 1984).

Jamaica would have surely passed it without question. This “watered down” version, however, was seen as resembling too closely the Western viewpoint.

This was true for many other delegates in attendance. As the delegate from the Philippines stated, in tune with Jamaica, “we wish to place on record our reservations concerning the following parts of the Declaration,” followed by a list of places where the Declaration had been stripped of its meaningful rhetoric. “I am sincerely perplexed,” the delegate continues, “that a number of ideas and sentiments embodied in the initial draft in document 20 C/20 have been deliberately removed” from the sections he referred to.¹¹² These included references to, namely, responsibilities and duties of the mass media and members of the press. It was believed that the press had a power, and therefore a duty, in preserving peace and standing against racism, inequality, and cruelty. The references to “responsibility,” however, were viewed suspiciously by members from the West.

The “right to reply,” also became a key issue throughout this debate. The original document had been stripped of any reference regarding the right of states to “reply” to news stories before being published in the media. Another great change that took place within the two years leading up to the passing of the declaration was the many references to “human rights” that were added in the final piece, including in the title.¹¹³ This fits well within what one scholar refers to as the neoliberal “pickpocketing” of the term sovereignty to apply not to the state, but to the individual. In other words, “it was not the nation-state represented by legislatures that was

¹¹² Selected Interventions in Programme Commission IV (Culture and Communication) at the 20th session of the General Conference, Paris, November 1978 (Unesco document 20C/135).

¹¹³ See Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. (Harvard University Press, 2018); Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*, (Harvard University Press, 2018); and *The Last Utopia*. (Harvard University Press, 2010).

sovereign but the individual within it.”¹¹⁴ Further, “Rather than reject human rights outright,” Slobodian poses, “the neoliberal tendency has been the undermine social democratic interpretations of human rights and international law while simultaneously co-opting them to cover clearly capitalist prerogatives.”¹¹⁵ This would become crucial for the outcome of this debate in years to come. Ultimately, the outcome of the Declaration was seen as a “watered down” version of the original. As the delegate from Jamaica lamented, “in order to secure a consensus,” the document had “in our opinion become so enfeebled.”

The document was “enfeebled,” or made relatively toothless, because of the Western push-back that began in 1976. As the Indian national D.R. Mankekar noted, “They [the West] ensured that the state did not interfere with or control media under any pretext and freedom of information was guaranteed. They successfully got deleted all references to states and their duties and obligations to media; introduced the Declaration of Human Rights into the title and the text; ensured to journalists freedom to report, the fullest possible access to information and the best possible conditions for the exercise of their professions. They also succeeded in diluting the controversial Article V, though not altogether eliminating it.”¹¹⁶ The delegate from Great Britain, Donald Kirkness, expressed his nation’s stance by stating that “had the original draft been put to the vote, the United Kingdom and many of the Western democracies would have had to oppose it, because it implied State control of editorial content.” In short, what is most glaring about the passing of this document is that although it was pursued most doggedly by members of

¹¹⁴ Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. (Harvard University Press, 2018), 118.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 136.

¹¹⁶ D.R. Mankekar, “All’s Well that Ends Well,” from *Media and the Third World*, New Delhi: Indian Institute of Mass Communication, 1979, 74-81 reprinted in Kaarle Nordenstreng and Lauri Hannikainen. *The mass media declaration of UNESCO*. (Praeger Pub Text, 1984).

the Third World, it is the Western delegates that speak most highly of it. After detailing the important pieces of this declaration, the American delegate, Esteban E. Torres states: “This is why I call it a triumph of goodwill and, may I add, of common sense, that can only serve to strengthen Unesco and the cause of international understanding.”¹¹⁷

Essentially, the Western nations - namely the United States and Great Britain - were attempting to pivot this debate from one concerning “lofty” rhetorical language focused on changing the status-quo with a “new world order” to one focused, rather, on more material and “technical” changes. In short, an agenda once prioritizing normative to one moving for gradual changes in the realm of information and communication. The delegate from Cuba, for example, pointed out that

the movement of non-aligned countries, considering it to be a favourable step towards the establishment of the new international information order and the new international economic order, unanimously agreed to endorse a declaration of principles on the mass media that would embody their aspirations for understanding and mutual respect, in the context of a balanced, objective circulation of news and messages among all the nations of the world.¹¹⁸

From the Western perspective, these words were seen as both intangible and decidedly radical. Instead, it was more useful and reasonable, according to the delegates of Great Britain, the United States, Australia and the Netherlands, to focus on material changes that would gradually act to balance the global flow of information. The West prioritized aid, the training of journalists, and the sharing of technology and equipment rather than “declarations” and high sounding principles. In short, this would not be a new world order by any means, but simply a more equitable one (on Western terms). What made this position so effective on the part of the West,

¹¹⁷ Selected Interventions in Programme Commission IV (Culture and Communication) at the 20th session of the General Conference, Paris, November 1978 (Unesco document 20C/135).

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

however, was that this was indeed an important element for the radicals of NWICO as well. In other words, even the most radical proponents for change could not deny that the material transfer of technology and funding was necessary. However, for many, this was rendered a zero-sum game. Admitting the need for technical aid was seen as compromising the mission of NWICO, for many. Ultimately, as the delegate from Denmark remarked, “We consider concrete measures to remedy these deep inequalities to be much more important for the development of communication than any number of lofty declarations.”¹¹⁹ It was for this reason that the Declaration was seen as a certain defeat in the mind’s of many people calling for a new world order. However, the Third World bloc did not end its effort to pursue change with the passing of this declaration.

Reagan and the Talloires Offensive

Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency the same year that the *MacBride Report* was published. His administration held a very different view from Carter’s in how to deal with the Third World call for NWICO. Drawing much from his understanding of domestic policy, Reagan’s foreign policy was aggressive and decidedly neoliberal. The post-war, New Deal era of faith in political inclusion was about to face its most powerful adversary. For Reagan, the excesses of New Deal liberalism was embodied by the *MacBride Report* and the political gesturing of the Third World within Unesco and the Non Aligned Movement. Further, while the Mass Media Declaration was undoubtedly the product of detente, things had changed when Reagan assumed the presidency. Reagan would not passively weather critique, as Carter had

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

before. The second half of this chapter, therefore, describes the successful Western attempt to ward off Third World criticism and officially end the debate.

At a meeting in 1981 which took place in Talloires, France, twenty nations came together to make a stand against the continued Unesco effort to problematize the perceived imbalances of the mass media. This meeting was called for by the World Press Freedom Committee, an NGO that was started in 1976. This interest group was explicitly founded in order to confront the call for a New World Information and Communications Order, in order to preserve press freedom and provide “constant monitoring” of the discussions taking place in the United Nations, namely within Unesco. The organization included forty-four organizations around the world, including international and national media institutions. The Talloires Meeting used hawkish language to express its adamant disapproval of the discussions taking place within Unesco, especially as emphasized in the publication of the *MacBride Report*.

“We support the universal human right to be fully informed,” the Talloires Meeting stated, “which right requires the free circulation of news and opinion. We vigorously oppose any interference with this fundamental right.” Misconstruing the aims of the critique taking place within Unesco, the Talloires Declaration continued:

We are aware that governments, in developed and developing countries alike, frequently constrain or otherwise discourage the reporting of information they consider detrimental or embarrassing, and that governments usually invoke the national interest to justify these constraints. We believe, however, that the people's interests, and therefore the interests of the nation, are better served by free and open reporting. From robust public debate grows better understanding of the issues facing a nation and its peoples; and out of understanding greater chances for solutions.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ *The Declaration of Talloires*, adopted by leaders of independent news organizations at the Voices of Freedom Conference, Talloires (France), 15-17 May, 1981.

The most significant pronouncement produced by Talloires was buttressed by statements regarding freedom and human rights, which the meeting construed as intrinsically under threat in much of the world. “We believe,” it asserts, that “the time has come within Unesco and other intergovernmental bodies to abandon attempts to regulate news content and formulate rules for the press.”¹²¹ In short, the meeting held, the time had come for the United States to put aside patience and move to the offensive. Press freedom and the freedom of the individual could only be protected, the Talloires Declaration agreed, if the United States stood up against Unesco. The Reagan administration declared its support only two days after. Vice President Bush stated that the

Reagan Administration expected Unesco to stop further activities ‘to control press freedom’. Elliot Abrams, the Assistant Secretary of State, recommended Unesco to take the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution as a model for the solution of the communication problems in the world. And in early June 1981, Senator Dan Quayle introduced a draft resolution into the Senate which obliged the United States to withdraw from Unesco in case the adoption of any plan to ‘control and regulate the distribution of news and ideas.’¹²²

Further, it was admitted that there were indeed inequalities in the present situation.

Following the earlier expressions by Western Unesco delegates, the Talloires Declaration stated that “We recognize that new technologies have greatly facilitated the international flow of information and that the news media in many countries have not sufficiently benefited from this progress. We support all efforts by international organizations and other public and private bodies to correct this imbalance and to make this technology available to promote the worldwide advancement of the press and broadcast media and the journalistic profession.”¹²³ This was an

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² George Gerbner, Hamid Mowlana, and Kaarle Nordenstreng, eds. *The Global Media Debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1993). Pages 16-17.

¹²³ *The Declaration of Talloires*, adopted by leaders of independent news organizations at the Voices of Freedom Conference, Talloires (France), 15-17 May, 1981.

effort to, as mentioned above, pivot the debate away from political rhetoric and towards the “technical.”

Further, an important shift at Talloires was that no longer would the Reagan administration be on the defensive about this topic. Instead, it would encourage the debate over media and information, yet in a more hawkish manner to defend and enshrine American principles rather than listen to outside critiques. “We believe that the debate on news and information in modern society that has taken place in Unesco and other international bodies should now be put to constructive purposes.” Namely, censorship must be protected against actively. Further, “access by journalists to diverse sources of news and opinion, official or unofficial, should be without restriction.” Importantly, the meeting states that there can be “no international code of journalistic ethics.” Also, they state that “members of the press should enjoy the full protection of national and international law.”¹²⁴ They stipulated, also, that licensing of journalists is not to be allowed. Further, they stated that to speak about “responsibilities for the press is to destroy its independence,” which had been a buzz word ever since the Nairobi Conference in 1976. And lastly, “We believe that the time has come within Unesco and other intergovernmental bodies to abandon attempts to regular news content and formulate rules for the press. Efforts should be directed instead to finding practical solutions to the problems before us, such as improving technological progress, increasing professional interchanges and equipment transfers, reducing communication tariffs, producing cheaper newsprint and eliminating other barriers to the development of news media capabilities.”¹²⁵ Ironically, these

¹²⁴ *The Declaration of Talloires*, adopted by leaders of independent news organizations at the Voices of Freedom Conference, Talloires (France), 15-17 May, 1981.

¹²⁵ *The Declaration of Talloires*, adopted by leaders of independent news organizations at the Voices of Freedom Conference, Talloires (France), 15-17 May, 1981.

were the very things that Unesco and the Non Aligned News Agencies Pool were trying to achieve. This is interesting, also, given the context that these (albeit, negative) legal pronouncements are tantamount to placing the practice of journalism under a universal code of ethics and within an international legalistic framework. In short, exactly what Western actors a few years prior stated was antithetical to the practice of journalism - or the “fourth estate.”

The Quayle/Moynihan Amendment

The Quayle/Moynihan Amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act was named after the Republican Senator, and later Vice President of the United States, Dan Quayle, and Democratic Senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. This non-partisan piece of legislation expressed official “opposition to ‘efforts by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to attempt to regulate news content and to formulate rules and regulations for the operation to the world press.’”¹²⁶ The issues cited by the amendment were specifically those dealing with journalistic codes of ethics, censorship, restrictions, licensing of journalists, or in short, anything dealing with the United States first amendment and the broader principle of freedom of the press. The piece catered, unquestioningly, to the view of Unesco that was shaped in the years prior by hostile and mostly misinformed media coverage.

The piece of legislation is significant because it represents the first time that the United States officially stipulated reducing funding for Unesco if these principles were not upheld by the agency. Specifically, as the United States contributed twenty-five percent of the budget to Unesco, the States Department would be authorized to “reduce the American contribution to

¹²⁶ Ibid, 44.

Unesco by 25 percent of said projects,” if the United States felt that these principles were threatened.¹²⁷

The Quayle/Moynihan Amendment lead quickly to hearings investigating the role of Unesco in the international media. In July of 1981, shortly after the passing of the amendment, hearings were held before the House Subcommittee on International Operations and on Human Rights and International Organizations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.¹²⁸ These hearings were held in order to review United States participation in Unesco. Further, on the docket was discussing a resolution “sponsored by Representatives Fenwick and Shamansky warning Unesco of American dissatisfaction with its treatment of information issues.”¹²⁹ Those providing testimony at these hearings were “decidedly unsympathetic to Unesco,” including Senator Quayle and members of the World Press Freedom Committee, an agency conceived with the expressed purpose of standing up against NWICO. The Resolution, as a result of these testimonies, was passed by a vote of 7-1. It stated that the United States “should cease efforts to attempt to regulate news content and to formulate rules and regulations for the operation of the world press.”¹³⁰ This was the first major warning shot to Unesco, expressing that the United States would be unwilling to sit idly by as their international media interests were being threatened.

The Beard Amendment

¹²⁷ Ibid, 44.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 44.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

As “the most significant piece of legislation on Unesco during the 1980s,” the Beard Amendment was passed in September of 1982, continuing the efforts of the Quayle/Moynihan amendment and the 1981 Resolution on Unesco. Unlike the previous amendment, which stipulated a reduction of twenty-five percent of funds for particular projects within Unesco, the Beard Amendment authorized the President to suspend all financial contributions to Unesco if the free flow of information was impinged in any way. Further, funding would be completely suspended if discussions continued within Unesco regarding codes of ethics, the licensing of journalists, or anything regarding news censorship. This was by far the most important development to come in the wake of the *MacBride Report*, as it gave the president full autonomy over questions of funding and membership to Unesco. As a Western nation had never abandoned a United Nations agency, this was an important step before any retaliation was to occur.

Robin Beard, a member of the United States House of Representatives, was a Republican from Tennessee, who served from 1976-1983 (incidentally the central years of the debate). About the issue, Beard stated that: “There is, I believe, a number of UNESCO members willing to adopt some sort of system aimed at controlling the world's press, and it is near to a majority.” Adopted by a vote of 372-19, the Beard Amendment placed the Secretary of State in charge of monitoring whether Unesco abided by these stipulations.¹³¹ In short, the path was now paved for United States action against Unesco. However, the question of withholding funding would soon become a question of membership in toto in the years to come. Rather than confronting this critique within the auspices of Unesco, however, the Reagan administration would simply stop listening.

¹³¹ "State Department Authority." In CQ Almanac 1981, 37th ed., 157-61. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1982. <http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqal81-1172058>.

Reagan abandons Unesco

Although many key moments took place from 1980-1982 that paved the way for leaving the agency, it was not until 1983 that this became imaginable. Legislation and meetings were invested in cutting funding and reshaping the agency from within, not, as it turned out, abandoning the agency altogether. However, President Reagan wished to make a stand against “unnecessary” public expenditures, which to him, Unesco certainly represented. The funding of Unesco was based on national GDP, giving the United States the greatest financial burden - though relative - in providing funds.

Not only was the United States footing the largest amount of money towards funding the organization, its mission and purpose seemed to have run its course. The agency itself represented a purely rhetorical power, one that supported change through consensus and widespread national inclusion. As a letter from Robert C. McFarlane to Secretary of State Shultz noted,

The President wishes us to continue to expend every effort to effect meaningful changes over the next year to eliminate the suppression of minority views and political diversions and restore fiscal integrity. In pursuing the effort he wishes you to consider significant upgrading of our representation in UNESCO and appointment of a panel consisting of senior representatives of the academic community, the media and the corporate world to advise us over the next year. He is prepared to review the decision to withdraw should concrete changes materialise.¹³²

Reagan rhetorically entertained the idea of staying in as a member of Unesco, while making all the necessary moves to recede. What became clear, in the drama before actually leaving the agency - which, according to first-hand accounts, no one in the agency, even the American

¹³² Ibid, 57.

delegates, expected - was that Reagan was committed to leaving unless the long-time and controversial M'Bow step down. M'Bow was in no position to capitulate to the American show of force. The legitimacy of the agency impinged upon M'Bow standing up against Reagan.

It was made clear that this retrenchment was not to extend beyond Unesco itself. At the same time that the United States declared that it would leave the agency at the end of the year, Secretary of State George P. Shultz stated that “our withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization does not presage any wider disengagement from the United Nations or its other specialized agencies.”¹³³ This demonstrates that America was largely making a stand against ideology. Reagan’s stand was not against addressing imbalances. However, these inequalities were to be addressed within the confines of a market economy. Pushing for a New World Information and Economic Orders through political representation was by definition destabilizing. The United States would not stand for these efforts; instead, it would aid in the gradual redressing of these imbalances. Only, however, if the political sloganeering and ideological efforts were dropped. Unesco represented, to the United States, the worst aspects of Third World solidarity. As Gregory Newell affirmed, the United States would “redouble” its efforts in other UN agencies at the same time they would pull out of Unesco because it had refused to “adjust its policies to meet American and other Western complaints.”¹³⁴ Bernard Gwetzman, journalist for *The New York Times*, wrote in December of 1983 that there were a few complaints in particular that led to the United States withdrawal.

First, Gregory Newell claimed that projects earmarked by Unesco were beyond its scope, including “Soviet-inspired” disarmament projects. Second, “Efforts to promote the licensing of

¹³³ Bernard Gwetzman, “U.S. is Quitting Unesco, Affirms Backing for U.N.” *The New York Times*, December 30, 1983.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

foreign reporters and the setting up of a ‘new world information order’ were inappropriate for the agency. And most importantly, Newell claimed that the agency favored “collectivist” rights at the *expense* of individual human rights. In short, according to Department of State spokesman Alan D. Romberg, “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.”¹³⁵ The arguments put forth in *MacBride Report* largely fell on deaf ears.

The Reagan administration released a statement on December 20, 1984 that Unesco “had largely failed to meet American *demands* that it rid itself of mismanagement, politicization and ‘endemic hostility’ toward a free press, free markets and individual human rights.”¹³⁶ The Heritage Foundation, unsurprisingly, was cited as having “praised” the Reagan administration for its “principled stand.” Martin Lasater, writing for the Heritage Foundation in December of 1984, argued that changes could be more easily pushed on the agency from “outside” rather than from “within.” He argues also that it is “important also to establish that the U.S. is not prepared to tolerate the wasting of the millions of dollars it gives to help the world's poor and illiterate.”¹³⁷ The Heritage Foundation was not alone, however, in praising Reagan’s decision. *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* supported the administration’s decision to leave the agency, largely because of its supposed support of Soviet-style censorship and state control of news media.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ B. Drummond Ayres Jr, “U.S. Affirms Plan to Leave Unesco at End of Month,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1984. Emphasis my own.

¹³⁷ Martin Lasater, “Time to Leave,” *The Heritage Foundation* (December 10, 1984).

The change that took place in the call for a New World Information and Communications Order can be embodied by a single change that took place in its self-designation in 1983. In the decade prior, the debate had centered an effort to institute fundamental changes in the balance and flow of information. This was to be a cultural as well as structural, material process. Previously calling for a “new world order” in the realm of information, Unesco added the “concession to Western interests intent on ensuring that the new order should not be viewed as requiring a sudden and radical transformation of existing communication structures,” by adding that this be an “evolving and continuous process.” This may have been the death knell for the debate that would soon simmer out under Western interest and force.

Conclusion

This thesis began by presenting the history of transnational media growth as a process deeply entangled with European territorial colonialism. Telegraphs were indelibly tethered to Empire in undeniable ways, and remained under Anglo-American control and operation well beyond the formation of a postcolonial world order. The breakthrough for the first “new world order” in information was pursued by ardent liberals in the wake of World War II. Kent Cooper stands out because of his self-conscious role in the transition from American to European news hegemony. Cooper congratulated himself for his role in the creation of an American news empire that legitimized itself in the assertion of its unique professionalism. The *Associated Press* held to a universal set of ethics that were viewed as global in nature. AP was motivated by a blanketing American epistemology which foiled itself against formal European empire, in that it followed a putatively professional, sterile ethics grounded in legalism and truth. Through this process, American news was rendered “unbiased” news.¹³⁸ Private, institutional and organizational “barriers” were the target of ambitious humanists in the wake of World War II, including Cooper, witnessing in them obstacles to a newfound global order grounded in peace and stability.

The United States had marshalled in a strong commitment and faith in liberalising global institutions for maintaining peace and stability on international stage in the wake of formal Empire. The institutions surrounding the media were seen as crucial for maintaining stability, largely through a shared doctrine in the “free flow of information.” One such institution was the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, headed first by the Briton

¹³⁸ This ideology was not singularly American, however, as it resonated across the Atlantic with European nationals juggling an untenable foreign policy in the wake of the war. For example, the Briton Julian Huxley enthusiastically embraced Cooper’s logic by extending it to the United Nations.

liberal, Julian Huxley. The successor of the League of Nations International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, Unesco was designed to maintain global stability and security by increasing communication and cooperation between nations. Therefore, despite Cooper's palpable enthusiasm in a new world order after World War II, stability and not change was the name of the game. European news agencies remained firmly in place in the newly independent nations of the non-Western world after the wake of World War II. Spheres of influence continued to exist. Often under the guise of "training" and "guidance," these institutions continued to operate in the previously colonized world, staffed predominantly by Americans and Europeans. The print languages of these newspapers most often remained the languages of the colonizers: French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and German. The only change, which ironically became politically of high importance in the decades following World War II, was the employment of inclusive language. This at least rhetorically allowed newly independent nations a voice on the international stage, although it took a few decades for this to be of any real importance.

Therefore, as early schemes for national development turned to disillusionment in much of the non-Western world by the early 1970s, citizens and governments alike turned to questioning what had earlier been taken for granted. With a voice and a vote in UN agencies outside of the Security Council, Third World nations began turning gestures of inclusion into political currency. Critics began emphasizing the "neo-imperialism" embedded in society. Thought to be the result of more subtle, structural aspects of political, social and economic life, this notion began to occupy discourse in the 1970s. One target of critique became the international market of information and news media, as access to producing information

remained largely unchanged since the 1940s. In particular, the “horizontal” flows of information between previously colonized nations remained rather limited. This became increasingly important as nations of the Third World began emphasized solidarity against the hegemony of the West, most apparently at the Conference of Bandung in 1955. Therefore, it was not only access to information, but a limited ability to produce information for an outside audience that frustrated many non-Western nations. Thus began the “second call” for a New World Information and Communications Order, sparking almost immediate debate between nations of the Third World and the West.

This thesis argues that the debate over information, taking place from 1975-1985, stands as an important - yet neglected - dimension of the wider transformations taking place on the international stage throughout these crucial years. This thesis investigates the debate in two phases, one defined by the rise of the Third World critique, and the other as the successful resistance of the Western bloc. The Third World bloc however, as argued above, was itself internally divided on this issue. There were, on the one hand, radical critics. These actors argued for a normative, theoretical overhaul of the institutions surrounding information media. Rather than a “fourth estate,” standing as a check on the national government, the media was for these actors a useful tool in national development. The moderate critics, on the other hand, attempted to downplay this sentiment by emphasizing structural imbalances. Leaving culture aside, these actors emphasized funding, training, and support. With the aid of training and funding, the Third World nations could develop their media institutions to be on par with more material rich nations.

This first phase of this debate can be categorized by the various successes of the Third World. By blending both normative and practical, technical critiques, the Third World bloc was able to effectively demonstrate the imbalances in the global media while strengthening media structures and institutions. Two developments serve as useful examples. The Non Aligned News Agencies Pool, begun in 1975, was a practical institution that helped to increase the flow of information between nations of the Third World. Second, this thesis argues that the *MacBride Report* stands as another success by nations of the Third World. Importantly, Unesco was central to both of these developments, lending both material and moral support. Further, this thesis argues that this first phase can also be characterized by the Western accommodation of and engagement with moderate critics. The Carter administration, privy to the normative critiques emanating from the Third World bloc, employed a “Marshall Plan” strategy. This strategy hinged upon passive engagement. Only through engaging in the media debate was it thought possible to disempower the more radical critics. This way, the Carter administration held, the West could control the direction of the debate and limit damage. A great change took place, however, as the Reagan administration took the presidency.

The Reagan administration, working in near concert with Thatcher’s Great Britain, would not suffer critiques of Western institutions, whether normative or not. This marked the beginning of the second phase of this debate. America and Great Britain were not ethically against funding Third World media institutions. But the “over politicization” of the Third World bloc, especially within Unesco, would not continue to be tolerated. Therefore, Reagan turned away from accommodation toward hostility. In favor of the passive engagement of the Carter administration, Reagan began the process of disengagement. He was never, however, wholly

disengaged. Reagan - with the aid of NGOs standing for freedom and human rights - began a dual process of disengaging from institutions which lent moral or material strength to the Third World, while at the same time actively combating critics of global media. This work showcases three such moments of engagement: the Quayle/Moynihan and Beard Amendments, and the Talloires Offensive. As these proved ineffective in shutting down debate, the United States and Great Britain did what no one considered an option. They withdrew from Unesco.

This paper ultimately argues that Reagan's stand against Unesco and the Third World bloc must be understood within the larger context of the ascending ideology of neoliberalism. As Quinn Slobodian carefully and impressively argues in his 2018 text, *The Globalists*, many neoliberals were not necessarily proponents for reducing the autonomy of institutions over the global marketplace. Rather, they were for "encasing," or protecting an "unknowable," but implicitly shared global market against the destabilizing nature of unchecked democracy and national sovereignty. In other words, they were supportive in the search for the *right* global institutions for encasing the market. For them, the national project of self-determinacy had the potential to destabilize the world by reducing the shared marketplace to the foibles of overreaching state actors. Nation-states, then, had no place in dictating the market. Nations were to be required by the rules of "same law" to remain within a shared framework in respect to the market, observing a legal obligation to private property. Only in this way can a world of separate nation-states and private property coexist. For the Geneva neoliberals, then, the rise of Third World nations touting national self-determination and self-sufficiency had the potential to shatter global capitalism all together. Again, as Slobodian argues, the only way to defend the market against this form of democracy was finding the right global institutions to protect and safeguard

the marketplace. Therefore, on the contrary, the neoliberal project invested great theoretical power in institutions to control, stabilize, and maintain the world of finance and private property in a world of nations.

Information itself would be central to this project. Eventually, with shared data and understanding, the separate but overlapping and entangled worlds of the “imperium” and “dominium” could operate in harmony. These were the terms preferred by Slobodian, adopted from Roman Law and utilized by Wilhelm Ropke, to describe a version of the neoliberal imaginary. *Imperium* can be understood as the politically bounded world of nation-states, and *dominium* the law of a shared economic sphere of private property and a free flow of goods, people and ideas. According to Slobodian, “The category of xenos rights helps us think about individuals having protected rights to safe passage and unmolested ownership of their property and capital, regardless of the territory. It is a right that inheres to the unitary economic space of dominium rather than the fragmented state space of imperium. - yet it requires the political institutions of imperium to ensure it.”¹³⁹ Simply speaking, this was the separation of the economy from government; the aims for national “self-sufficiency” and economic “autonomy” resulted from a misunderstanding, or conflation, of two separate spheres: economy and politics. The “politicization” of the economy for the neoliberals was a dangerous proposition, further disintegrating what was deemed a unitary globe of private property. The sovereignty of the nation-state had to be twice reduced in order for this vision to succeed. On the one hand, the nation-state needed to surrender upward some autonomy to the shared space of *dominium*, enforced by a global institution. On the other hand, it needed to surrender some autonomy

¹³⁹ Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. (Harvard University Press, 2018), 123.

downward, to the individual within the nation. This is crucial for understanding the project of neoliberalism as it played out during the 1970s. In short, the campaign of the neoliberals was aimed to “create a legal framework to uphold the distinction between the imperium of government and the dominion of property. Neoliberals reached to the armory of law to rebuild the distinction between property and territory.”¹⁴⁰

Therefore, in this rendition of the neoliberal utopia, media institutions were in need of protection against overreaching nation-states. Both the individual person within the nation and *dominium* above it held the nation-state in check, precluding its right to control - or enhance - the flow of information. It is within this context that this media debate can be best understood, as many neoliberals fought passionately for the existence and necessity of some institutions while discrediting the legitimacy and usefulness of others.¹⁴¹ For the neoliberal, both the protection of private property as well as the human rights of the individual hinged upon the protection of the free flow of information across the globe. Private media institutions had a right to access, based upon the doctrine of *dominium*, spaces delineated by *imperium*. This was in order to safeguard the individual human right to be informed. Nation-state boundaries, for neoliberals, had no power to restrict the flow of information, nor the flow of goods, people, and capital. This argument was powerfully asserted by co-opting the language of “negative” human rights, as states would be denied the right to restrict or limit these flows.

Importantly, however, the “positive” domain of human rights was dutifully neglected by the neoliberal project and its vision regarding the flow of information. First and foremost, the

¹⁴⁰ Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. (Harvard University Press, 2018), 138.

¹⁴¹ Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. (Harvard University Press, 2018).

global distribution of wealth would remain unchanged by protecting the status quo from politically “over-reaching” Third World states. For example, as George Gerbner poses, “If the mass media had used different frames, other issues would have surfaced and facts that the media ignored would have become relevant.” For example, “they would have drawn the analogy between the exit and reduction in function of Unesco programs, generally addressed to the needs of the world’s poor, and the drastic cutbacks in programs for the less affluent within the United States.”¹⁴² In other words, as the United States was in the process of reshaping its notion of domestic political inclusion to preclude voices of those without access to wealth, the Reagan administration was also making a stand against nation-states making similar claims on the international stage. Politically problematizing the imbalances in the global economy was apparently not the appropriate role for the nation-state within the framework of neoliberalism. As the “one-state-one-vote” model was virtually achieved throughout the UN, it was vigorously attacked by proponents of neoliberalism. However, the nation-state itself may have presented to Third World nations the only effective mouthpiece for problematizing such imbalances. The media debate described above only represents one such piece of this larger push for a New World Order.

¹⁴² George Gerbner, Hamid Mowlana, and Kaarle Nordenstreng, eds. *The Global Media Debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1993), 125.

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