

# FROM "MANY VOICES, ONE WORLD" TO "MANY WORLDS, ONE VOICE"

REFLECTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNICATION REALITIES IN THE  
AGE OF GLOBALISATION

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## Abstract

Since its publication in October 1980 by UNESCO's International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, the *MacBride Report* has spawned heated discussions on issues relating to cross-border media flows, professional norms and ethics, communications technologies, and the role of media in social transformation. In this article, the writer argues that political, economic and cultural transformations in the global arena over the past 15 years have given rise to new realities that seem antithetical to the MacBride legacy of "many voices and one world." It has been noted that growing U.S. domination of world political and economic developments has had adverse effects on a range of communication issues like diversity, cultural identity, sovereignty and the right to communicate. However, the writer draws on current globalisation literature to argue that while the world seems to be converging on a globalised American-style model of political, cultural and economic evolution, forces of indigenous cultural expressions embedded in non-Western communities will always make a difference in the emerging communication landscape.

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Since its publication in October 1980 by UNESCO's International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, the *MacBride Report* has generated a wide range of debates on issues relating to cross-border media flows, professional norms and ethics, communications technologies, and the role of media in social transformation. Although discussions on communication problems were initially inspired by Cold War politics, the realities of international communication in the late 1970s and early 1980s pointed to serious flaws in national and international communication arenas as manifested in imbalanced news flows; dominance of Western-centric media orientations; North monopolies of media resources and technologies; and marginalisation of Third World issues and achievements. The MacBride Commission Report at that time represented the best international concurrence on addressing such communication issues on the basis of recognizing national, cultural and ethnic diversities within a single world.

A quarter of a century later, the notion of "many voices, one world" seems to have given way to new realities that draw rather on the premise of "many worlds, one voice" in international communication. The advent of globalisation as a sweeping political, cultural, economic and technological phenomenon has rendered many of the MacBride Report's philosophical assumptions irrelevant with the erosion of national sovereignties and national identities. While the MacBride Commission called for the establishment of a world with many voices, current trends in global realities seem to point to a process of political, economic and cultural convergence on what appears to be an Americanised model of culture, politics and economics. Sweeping cultural, political, and ethnic resurgence around the world is making it possible for long-suppressed communities to clamour for national and global recognition. Yet, these emerging cultural and ethnic resurrections seem to derive their legitimacy not from their intrinsically indigenous cultural and ethnic foundations, but rather from aligning themselves with American-style political, cultural and economics ideals.

This paper analyzes metamorphoses in international communication realities since the publication of the MacBride Report (1980) to current times. The writer argues that while global changes seem to be inspired by a sweeping rush towards more liberalisation, democratisation and self-determination, the defining conceptual umbrella for this transformation has always been intrinsically American and lacking adequate cognizance for political and cultural diversity embedded in the MacBride Report. As such, the question posed by the writer relates to the nature and implications of globalisation-driven departures from the MacBride Report's vision of the role of communication in fostering international pluralism and peaceful co-existence.

## The Historical Context of the MacBride Report

Since the inception of the post-World War II international community, trans-border communication was always a central issue in international debates involving societies with divergent political and ideological orientations. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), recognized the right to freedom of opinion and expression stating that "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 Declaration's preamble noted that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defences of peace should be constructed." As Cold War tensions heightened between Western countries led by the United States and Soviet-bloc countries of Eastern Europe, freedom of information as a central universal human value was often invoked by Western governments in international debates involving media functions and human right issues. In the immediate post-colonial era of the 1960s and 1970s, Third World countries in Asia and Africa found themselves in the midst of that ferocious debate, particularly as they came to realise the visible dominance of Western media in their nascent societies and the potential disruptions that might generate for their nation-building efforts. Hence, it was natural that many developing countries chose to align themselves with Soviet-bloc positions on issues of media functions and information flows. Although such alignment was primarily induced by evolving East-West politics, it was substantiated by a range of empirical studies that demonstrated imbalanced media flows into their societies.

The introduction of mass media institutions, especially television, into Third World countries in the 1960s and 1970s generated a good amount of research, most of it seemed either to have a descriptive nature, or to fall into broader frameworks of media analysis. Mosco (1996) noted that Third World countries were especially critical of transnational corporate media systems in terms of: (1) the global economic imbalance between the North and the South; (2) the Western monopoly of global news services with their content focused mainly on developed countries; and (3) the dominance of news and entertainment programming which, because it reflected often-alien Western values, was deemed imperialist. Varis (1984) found that the flow of international television news moved in a one-way pattern from Western countries to the developing world. In their pioneering work on broadcasting in the Third World, Katz and Wedell (1978) noted that television institutions in Developing Countries had yet to come a long way before realising their stated goals as tools of national development. Television organisations in 13 Third-World countries covered by the study faced numerous challenges relating to programming, staff training, and technological development. Other policy-analysis studies on individual television systems in Developing Countries in the 1980s confirmed earlier concerns over of heavy program imports, dull locally-produced programming, centralised and politically-oriented broadcast management, and insufficient skilled national staff (Chan 1994; Ayish 1989; McPhail 1989; Varis 1984; Abu Lughd 1993).

From a theoretical point of view, these works have addressed media functions and structures on the basis of two models of analysis: modernisation and dependency (Tehrani 1999). While the modernisation paradigm dominated media studies, policies and projects in Developing Countries in the 1960s and early 1970s, the dependency paradigm inspired a wide range of critical research in late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. The notion of communication as a potential engine of socio-economic change gained widespread popularity in the immediate post-World War II period in the midst of rising expectations of media role in nation building. Following the establishment of post-colonial nation states in Africa and Asia, debates arose among Western academics and policy makers on how to bring about development into those emerging regions. Works by Lerner et al. (1958) and Schramm

(1964) focused on how media could alter individual and group attitudes towards issues and practices as pre-requisites for socio-economic change. It was suggested that traditional values dominant in Developing Countries were major obstacles to political participation and economic prosperity, the two key elements of modernisation. Media of communication were viewed as a panacea for socio-economic and political woes. Hence, communication policies emanating from the modernisation paradigm provided for media diffusion to manipulate attitudes in a manner conducive to the realisation of desired changes. Communication experts identified what were termed as “media indicators” (minimum number of cinema seats, radio and television receivers, or copies of daily newspapers as a ratio of population necessary for development) (Pye 1963; Rogers 1962; Frey 1973).

By the late 1960s, however, developing countries were experiencing a revolution of rising frustrations. The modernisation paradigm was criticised for its ethnocentrism, ahistoricity, linearity, and for advancing solutions which actually reinforced dependency on former colonial powers. In addition, disappointment with media conceptions as powerful agents of change generated more critical views regarding mass communication contributions to national development, the most outstanding of which was the “dependency paradigm”. Inspired in part by the dependency theories of development and underdevelopment in Latin America, this critical paradigm argued that media role in national development should be investigated within existing local and international relations among different states or organisations. Dependency thinkers noted that a study of media ownership patterns would reveal their control by groups of economic, military, and political elite whose continuity and progress derive from their dependency on actors based in capitalist nations of North America and Western Europe. Theorists subscribing to significant aspects of the dependency approach included Rogers (1976), Schiller (1976), and an increasing number of Third-World scholars such as Freire (1972) and Amin (1997).

The “dependency paradigm,” building on critical studies of imperialism (Gunder-Frank 1972), was cognizant of global structures and interrelationships conditioning Third World development. It was noted that post-independence dynamics seemed to have kept Third World states economically locked into former colonial powers, arguing that development had to be conceived primarily as an autonomous, self-chosen path that draws on indigenous cultures. The model of cultural imperialism argued that international flows of media hardware and “software” products seemed to have strengthened dependency and inhibited true development. The great merit of the models of “cultural imperialism” (Schiller 1976; Nordenstreng and Schiller 1979; Matterlart 1979) and “media imperialism” (Boyd-Barrett 1977; Lee 1980) was their recognition of global dynamics and relationships. They were also cognizant of potential linkages between foreign policy interests, capitalist expansion and media infrastructures, on one hand, and media content, on the other hand. Concerns over cultural homogenisation and synchronisation (Hamelink 1995) spawned calls for Third World “cultural disassociation” along the line of Amin’s “de-linking” (1997) from the global capitalist system as the only way toward autonomous. This theoretical model derived its explanatory power from a wide range of empirical studies that documented unbalanced media flows between North and South (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Guback 1977; Varis 1984; Golding 1979).

Dependency theorists argued that media systems were transferred from Western societies to Developing Countries as part of colonial legacies to perpetuate Western influence in those regions (Golding 1979). The flow of Western programming into Third World television in the post-colonial era was also viewed as a new form of cultural imperialism. During the 1970s, Third World calls for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) placed Developing Nations in a head-on collision with Western governments and media. Third World spokesmen argued that Western media dominated the global flow of information by controlling news agencies, television production houses, and advertising agencies, thus gaining a greater say in global information flows (Masmoudi 1979). On the other hand, Western nations charged that Developing Countries of trying to curb free information flows through the establishment of highly restrictive media regimes (Sussman 1981). The first debates about unequal information flow between different parts of the world came up in the 1970s, mainly with the demanding of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) by Third World leaders who argued "that Western media through control of major international information channels gave an exploitative and distorted view of their countries to the rest of the world" (Thussu 2000, 43). Former Tunisian Information Minister Mustapha Masmoudi formulated their demands, pointing out a "de facto hegemony" evident in the indifference of the media in the West to "the problems, concerns and aspirations of the developing countries", upon which "transnational media impose their own way of seeing the world" (Masmoudi 1979, 172-3).

In 1977 UNESCO initiated the International Commission for the Study of Communications Problems, known as the MacBride Commission and named after the Commission's Chairman Sean MacBride. The Commission was given a three-year timeframe to conduct investigations and report back to UNESCO. In October 1980, the report *Many Voices, One World* was presented at the Belgrade Assembly. As a result of the report, UNESCO launched the International Programme for the Development of Communication "to strengthen the means of mass communication in developing countries, by increasing technical and human resources for the media and developing community media and by modernising news agencies and broadcasting organisations." The MacBride Report proposed, among other things, the respect for the rights of each nation to inform the world public about its interests and values, and the right of all peoples to participate in international exchanges of information (UNESCO 1980). These issues culminated in the call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Amongst its 82 recommendations, the Report also called for eliminating media imbalances between countries; protecting the rights of journalists; reducing commercialism in the media; use of the media to aid oppressed peoples; and recognition of the freedom of the press and freedom of information.

Negative U.S. responses to the MacBride Report marked a new phase of divisive relationship with UNESCO. The U.S. Government and most major private media in the industrialised world charged that the report was a recipe for authoritarianism and media gagging, demanding the total rejection of its call for equity, balance, and democracy because any policies based on these principles would threaten the free marketplace of ideas. U.K News organisations in the West responded, "they were only reporting the reality of life in the Third World – political

instability, economic backwardness, human and natural disasters – and that this objective journalism was disapproved of by undemocratic governments in the South” (Thussu 2000, 48). Supporters of the document responded by noting, among other things, that the overwhelming bias and distortion in media’s own coverage of the Commission showed how the world’s media was under the control of a few dominant monopolies who were increasingly able to choke off the flow of ideas that challenged their power. The U.S. and Britain finally decided on withdrawing from UNESCO, thereby leaving the organisation politically battered and with a much-reduced budget. On the tenth anniversary of the Commission report, the *New York Times* declared that even the head of UNESCO was committed to ending what little remained of the New World Information and Communication Order, partly in order to coax back the U.S. and UK.

A key theme advanced by the MacBride Report was that, in order to authentically contribute to cultural and social understanding, media must first serve social and cultural development. This suggests that before nations and peoples could enter into global dialogue, they first needed the resources, skills and opportunity to engage in that dialogue more or less as equals. The Report, perhaps echoing a spirit of détente at that time, highlighted the notion of diversity as a prerequisite for achieving more balanced and culturally fulfilling communications. Hence, the Report’s criticism of international media monopolies underscored deep concerns over the inhibitive effects of transnational media organisations on levels of political and cultural diversity by noting that this corporate dominance favoured the objectives of commercial profit over the objectives of social and cultural development. The Report (UNESCO 1980) concluded:

*We can sum up by saying that in the communication industry there are a relatively small number of predominant corporations which integrate all aspects of production and distribution, which are based in the leading developed countries and which have become transnational in their operations.’ In the decades since, growth and consolidation of these conglomerates has only accelerated; they are larger and their reach is greater than ever.*

## The Changing Face of International Communication: From Diversity to Dominance

The 1990s marked a dramatic turning point in contemporary human history, not only because they witnessed the end of the 50-year Cold War and East-West politics, but because they heralded more drastic transformations that had yet to come. In his remarkable work on world global communication and world politics, Tehranian’s descriptions of this transition seem quite insightful (1999, 1-2):

The opening of a new century has always served as a symbolic turning point in human history. The 21st century is not an exception. The world stands at a historical juncture on the roads to self-destruction or self-renewal. ... The conquest of ignorance, poverty, and suffering, the achievement of a new harmony among nations and between nature and humanity, and the development of a new sense of world community for the exploration of outer and inner spaces all seem within reach.

However grand these achievements may be, structural violence continues to ripen our world for ideological crusades. The bad news is that over 15 million chil-

dren die of malnutrition every year; some 20 million children have been killed by starvation or guns during world conflicts of the last decade, in which mostly civilians are the casualties; and over 50 million refugees have been displaced by civil, ethnic, and state wars. The good news is that the first global television networks (CNN, BBC, and Star) are bringing the stories of these conflicts into the homes of people in over 150 countries. Nearly 200 countries and over 100 million netizens (network citizens) are playing doctors through the Internet's interactive computer networks, in a global discourse on the diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy of world problems. It is timely to ask, therefore, what contributions can international communication make to the eradication of structural violence and to the fostering of peace and development?

Although it has been well over a decade since humanity stepped into the phase of its historical development (the 1990s), the nature and magnitude of structural transformations remain largely uncertain. However, it is already clear that globalisation has become the defining concept of this change. Mowlana (1996, 1) notes that the dramatic growth in communications and telecommunication technologies in the 1980s, the increasing sophistication of less developed nations, and the rise to supranational status of international organisations are only a few of the factors changing the face of contemporary international relations and international communication research and inquiry. Advancements in communications technologies represented by satellite television and the World Wide Web, more than ever before, have not only accelerated the pace of global change, but have also brought it to bear on the daily lives of individuals and communities. A major impact of globalisation on social sciences has been noted in the diminishing value of analytical paradigms that had guided international media research in the 1970s and 1980s. It has been recently argued that globalisation has brought with it a peculiar system of political, social, economic and cultural relations whose explication seems to defy explanatory schemes of the past four decades. A central feature of this change has been the transition of international communication into a new era of global communication. Mowlana (1996, 193-194) identifies 10 dynamics occurring with the field of international communication in its new era:

- The move of considering international communication in the traditional sense to a vision of global communication.
- The realisation that this new global conception, which recognizes new communicative actors, is not universal.
- The increase of conflict arising along the lines of culture and civilization.
- Recognition of two opposing trends in the international arena, positing a rise of nationalism and ethnicity against a resurgent universalism.
- A move towards regionalism primarily within an economic framework reflecting emerging technologies and productive processes.
- The decline of the power of nation-state as the pre-dominant international actor, and the rise of new entities, which I labelled "ghetto states."
- The erosion of national sovereignty and traditional forms of state power and the rise of trans-nationals.
- The re-assertion of the so-called dominant paradigm as a paradigm of dominance in forms of neo-modernism, post-modernism, neo-conservatism, and neo-liberalism.

- The reconsideration of the epistemological basis of the field.
- The necessary re-conceptualisation of our methodological tools in terms of our categories and levels of analysis.

The advent of globalisation as a unidirectional and one-way process of political, cultural and economic change largely inspired by new-conservative American ideals has set off heated debates around the world. An important part of the globalisation debate seeks to understand global changes in relation to local environments within “nation states.” Although some globalisation theorists seem to rule out local variables in the face of sweeping global forces, others have taken a new approach, drawing on the synthesis of global and local variable into a single framework of analysis. Robertson’s concept of “glocalisation” (1992) has been used to denote a degree of symbiosis between the local and the global. Four aspects of this interplay relationship bearing on media systems are noted: political democratisation, economic market-oriented reforms, intercultural openness, and technological diffusion. Each one of these “interactive” local-global relationships derives from distinctive philosophical and ethical considerations. It is believed that media success seems to be highly contingent on its ability to reconcile both local and global variables into a uniform frame of political and cultural reference. Mowlana (1996, 198) notes:

That which appears to be in the process of globalization are forces of production, distribution/delivery, and consumption of goods and services. It is important to stress that although the consumption of goods and services may indicate a pattern of homogeneity ... this does not in any way imply that consumers across the globe are homogeneous in terms of values, attitudes and morals.... Thus generally speaking globalization may be said to be a process of structuration and encompasses homogenization and heterogenization – a process in which agencies operating under different temporal sequences interact to connect and alter varying structures of social existence to create a structurally oligarchic, but interconnected world. The paths or flows of globalization can be multi-directional and multi-dimensional; they cut across vertical (individual, class, group, state, international levels) and horizontal (law, economics, politics, culture, education) organizations of human life.

Sreberny-Mohammadi (1997, 180) recalls that earlier arguments for “communication and development,” and the “cultural imperialism” model were based on a situation of a comparative global media scarcity, limited global media players, and embryonic media systems in much of the Third World. In the 1990s, she points out, it is clear that the international media environment was more complex than that suggested by the “cultural imperialism” model. In its basic configuration, globalisation denotes a multi-faceted process in which the world is being rapidly moulded into a shared social space by economic and technological forces. The concept also suggests that developments in one region of the world can have profound consequences for the life chances of individuals and communities in the other side of the globe (Held et al. 1999).

Although globalisation, as an evolving process, has been around for the past decade, there is no consensus among researchers on its peculiar features. Held et al. (1999) identify three broad views of the nature and meaning of globalisation. First, the *hyper-globalists’* view, which argues that we live in an increasingly global



world in which states are being subject to massive economic and political processes of change. In these circumstances, states are increasingly becoming “decision-takers” and NOT “decision makers.” Second, the *sceptics’* view which sees contemporary global circumstances as not unprecedented. According to this view, the search for global dominance has been a centuries-old concern, and what we see now is a mere intensification of international and social activity. Third, the *transformationalist* view, which argues that globalisation, is creating new economic, political and social circumstances which, however unevenly, are serving to transform state powers and the context in which states operate. Tehranian (1999) sees globalisation as a process that has been going on for the past 5000 years, but has significantly accelerated. Elements of globalisation include massive trans-border flows of capital, labour, management, news, images, and data. Leading the process of globalisation are transnational corporations (TNCs), transnational media organisations (TMCs), intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and alternative government organisations (AGOs). States, according to this view, have lost their grip on many domains, including economic and political sectors (Nordenstreng and Schiller 1993).

Robertson (1992, 8) conceives of globalisation as “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole.” In this sense, globalisation involves the crystallisation of four main components of the “global human circumstance”: societies (or nation states), the system of societies, individuals (selves), and humankind. This, according to Robertson (1992, 27), takes the form of processes of, socialisation, internationalisation, individuation, and generalisation of consciousness about humankind respectively. Unlike Tehranian’s reference to globalisation as a multitude of historical processes, Robertson’s view captures “the form in terms of which the world has moved toward unicity” (1992, 175). Robertson’s notion of “glocalisation” has been used in reference to the fact that universal ideas and processes involved in globalisation necessarily are interpreted and absorbed differently according to the vantage point and history of particular local groups. Giddens (1997) firmly situates globalisation as a consequence of modernity, whose dynamics radically transform social relations across time and space. He argues that globalisation occurs in four key domains: the extension of the nation-state system; the global reach of the capitalist economy coupled with the international division of labour; and a global system of military alliances

### Global Political Transitions

From a *political* point of view, globalisation has been defined as “a process by which the capitalist world system spreads across the actual globe” (Wallerstein 1998). Contemporary globalisation is associated with a transformation of state power as the roles and functions of states are re-articulated, reconstituted and re-embedded at the intersection of globalising and regionalising networks and systems. Closely relevant to the spread of political globalisation is the concept of the democratic governance based on electoral representation and “free marketplace of ideas.” The break up of the former Soviet Union and the end of the Cold have not only marked an end to the viability of totalitarian political systems, but also signalled a global search for alternative power-sharing schemes. In the early 1990s, former U.S. President George Bush’s call for a “New World Order” unleashed a systematic Ameri-

can worldwide drive for democratisation as the most sustainable political and social alternative to totalitarian systems in Eastern Europe and Asia. Democratisation has been presented as a recipe for addressing political woes in the nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Drawing on its sweeping uni-polar global domination in the 1990s, the United States spearheaded international moves to promote and establish political participatory practices by integrating democratisation into its global engagement ideology. In 1993, the Clinton administration declared that all U.S. foreign policy would be guided by the doctrine of “enlargement,” aimed at expanding the community of democratic states. According to Cohn (1999), this policy shift has spawned bureaucratic rearrangements affiliated with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the National Security Council. Global democratisation has been a central theme advanced by U.S. President G. W. Bush since the tragic September 11 events. Ever since the introduction of democratic reforms has been a defining feature of the U.S. global war on terrorism. On the other hand, the double-headed U.S. policy of combating terrorism and preaching democratic reforms has been viewed with profound scepticism by many as lacking both vision and credibility.

The United Nations has also been a strong supporter of the global drive for democratisation, billing it the best model to ensure a framework of liberties for lasting solutions to political, economic and social problems facing our societies. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali described democratisation as a process leading to a more open, more participatory, and less authoritarian society (Ghali 1999). He notes that democratisation has had a marked impact on the United Nations. Just as newly independent states turned to the United Nations for support during the era of de-colonization, “so today, following another wave of accession to statehood and political independence, member states are turning to the United Nations for support in democratisation” (Ghali 1999). In this sense, the UN has turned from an international body of political and ideological accommodation into a spearhead for global U.S. policies. The notion of democratisation has also been taken up by numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around the world. Amnesty International, Article 19, and Freedom House are just examples of those organisations that have placed democracy, though not always from a U.S. perspective, on top of their global agendas. Such NGOs’ democratic reform crusade around the world has created tensions with local political and cultural players in Third World countries, including those in the Middle East. The arrest and imprisonment of Egyptian sociologist Saadiddin Ibrahim on charges of receiving foreign funds to promote democratic and human rights practices in Egypt is a case in point.

While no one questions the historical efficacy of democracy as a human political value underlying good governance, the global drive for realising democratic reforms is taken to task on two points. First, the world-wide U.S. push for democratisation as the only viable political formula for realising good governance obfuscates other historically efficient arrangements that had yielded sustainable political stability; ensured human right protection and political participation; and generated marked economic progress for the community. The most significant aspect of such governance schemes is they arose from indigenous cultural grounds and were hence conducive to the preservation of cultural identities. Second, the ap-

plication of democratic reforms according to internationally-recognized standards in different countries was not always bound to generate U.S.-government approval simply because the country engaging in such democratic processes is not aligned with U.S. policies. The cases of Iran and Venezuela testify to this grim reality. In all situations, one cannot but feel the insistence on limiting the democratic experience to a set of politically dictated standards. We all can imagine where such arm-twisting is taking the international community or what is left of it!

### Global Economic Transitions

Dunne and Wheeler (1999) noted that from an *economic* viewpoint, production of goods and services is based on a global division of labour and coordinated in many areas by globally active corporations. The basic feature of this economic trend has been a shift from centralised to market-oriented economies at national and regional levels. In his best-selling book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999), *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman notes three fundamental changes that brought about the end of the Cold War balance-of-power system: how we communicate, how we invest, and how we learn about the world. He uses the phrase “golden straightjacket” to describe emerging U.S.-driven economic policy trends around the world. Friedman also coins the phrase “*Electronic Herd*” to aptly describe the “millions of faceless stock, bond and currency traders sitting behind computer screens all over the globe, moving their money around with the click of a mouse.... or trading from their basements on the Internet.” According to Friedman, the herd consists of the big multinational corporations who now spread their factories around the world, constantly shifting them to the most efficient, low-cost producers.” In the midst of these structural transformations in the global economy, many countries with traditional economic systems are “left out in the cold”, plagued by international debts and serious social crises.

The economic implications of globalisation have not been received with unanimous approval within the intellectual community around the world. The major pillars of economic globalisation: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have come under fire as serving Western (especially American) business interests to the exclusion of those of Third World nations. Opponents of market reforms also charge that the new developments are likely to deepen poverty levels and keep wealth concentration in the hands of the few. Anti-globalisation protests in Seattle, Prague, Venice, Doha, and Gleneagles have attested to the lack of unanimity within the international community on the nature of economic reforms prescribed by these organisations. Friedman as a proponent of emerging economic trends has been criticised for lacking engagement with the vibrant scholarly literature on globalisation (Rupert, 2000).

Although market-based approaches have been defining features of Western economies since the end of World War II, it was only in the 1990s that the promotion of this orientation came to be systematically driven into global proportions. The end of the Cold War suggested a demise of centralised/socialist-based economies and a shift to more market-based systems in which the private sector plays a major role vis-à-vis government. The United States has spearheaded international efforts for lifting inter-border trade barriers and liberating national economies of traditional state controls. International organisations like the World Bank, WTO,

and IMF have been at the forefront of global campaigns to bring about market-oriented reforms in formerly centralised or socialist economies. Assistance to ailing economies has been made contingent on the implementation of those reforms that included, among other things, a diminution of public sector input into national economies, and an integration into global structures. A key trend in the evolving economic globalisation has been the introduction of privatisation as the showcase for economic reform recipes. The rise of privatisation derives from the failure of centralised state-controlled economies to stimulate economic growth and address emerging economic issues.

### Global Cultural Transitions

From a *cultural* perspective, globalisation has been defined as “the growth and enactment of world culture (Boli and Thomas 1997) and “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole (Robertson 1992, 8). Hannerz (1991) notes that globalisation and its culture moves outwards from the “centre” towards the periphery in largely one-way flows. He argues that centre-periphery relations are much more complex; cultural flows move in multiple directions; and thus the outcomes are opposite tendencies, both toward what he calls “saturation and maturation, toward homogenisation and heterogenisation.” Clearly the globalisation ethos entails a tendency of cultural convergence towards a core cultural system which seeks to absorb or subjugate competing systems through a subtle process of dominance and exclusion.

Two powerful perspectives seem to dominate public discourse about the cultural implications of globalisation, the first presenting globalisation as cultural homogenisation and the second is of cultural fragmentation and political conflict. In the first scenario, culturally distinct societies are flooded with global goods, media, ideas and institutions (Barbers 1998). As two writers note (Breidenbach and Zukrigl 1998) “in a world where people from Vienna to Sidney eat BigMacs, wear Benetton clothes, watch MTV or CNN, talk about human rights and work on their IBM computers, cultural characteristics are endangered.” Because these commodities and ideas are mostly of Western origin, globalisation is perceived as Westernisation or Americanisation in disguise. The other perspective is that of cultural fragmentation and intercultural conflict as exemplified in works by Huntington (1998) about clashes of civilizations. These two perspectives have been labelled as ethnocentric, reflecting Western biases of evolving global realities. Breidenbach and Zukrigl (1998) suggest an ethnographic perspective of cultural globalisation drawing on local interpretations of globally originated cultural forms. According to this perspective, cultural globalisation is a highly dialectic process, in which globalisation and localisation, homogenisation and heterogenisation, centralisation and decentralisation, conflict and creolisation are not excluding opposites, but inseparable sides of the same coin.

Giddens (1999) notes that the cultural effects of globalisation trickle down into the minute details of our daily lives. He writes:

It is wrong to think of globalization as just concerning the big systems such as the world financial order. Globalization is not only about what is “out there,” remote and far away from the individual. It is an “in here” phenomenon too, influencing intimate and personal aspects of our lives. The debate about family

values...that is going on in many countries, might seem far removed from globalizing influences. It is not. Traditional family systems are becoming transformed or are under strain in many parts of the world, especially as women stake claim to greater equality.

In the midst of this, satellite television and the Internet have been at the forefront of emerging international communication tools, addressing advertising, entertainment, and marketing needs of transnational corporations around the world. Media have also been effective conduits of cultural products as evident in regional and global television networks catering to multi-cultural audiences with heavy entertainment loads. As for news, global broadcast and print media have also come to consolidate their five-decade control over the flow of information on regional and international issues. The success of CNN in reporting developments during the 2nd Gulf War in 1991 was decisive in giving primacy to American views of the conflict, and hence more powerful in shaping international public opinion about the issue at hand.

The role of Western (especially American) media as agents of globalisation has received considerable attention around the world. Authors of a book about media in a global context (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. 1997, x) suggest that rising interest in globalisation may be attributed to the rate at which this phenomenon has come to bear on the experience of everyday life. According to this view, aspects of globalisation include among other things, ownership, and the shared possession and use across national boundaries of cultural icons and media products. The global availability of an increasing range of moving image contents in film and broadcasting, press and magazine coverage and photography, and music is particularly difficult to ignore. In exploring links between globalisation and media, it was noted that the theme of globalisation suggests either the subversion or supplementation of national cultural identities in favour of alternative, perhaps more localised or more global sources of identity. According to some researchers, media actors, including the international print and television news agencies, have been relocated within a perspective of globalisation discourse context (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. 1997, x).

Discussions of the interplay between globalisation and communications suggest those spaces of interaction between people, information, institutions and cultural traditions are being transformed. In this sense, patterns of social interaction and information flows are increasingly occurring across national boundaries to form new bases of political and cultural identity. In contrast to the historical tendency to use communication media to vertically integrate societies within the contours of the nation-state, emerging patterns of social interaction, political organisation and information flows are being supplemented by patterns of transnational, horizontal integration. The process of horizontal integration is manifested in certain aspects, one of which is the process whereby people are increasingly addressed across national boundaries on the basis of class status and other cultural attributes by marketing, political, and cultural agencies. Other contributing factors to the increased levels of transnational and social interactions are the patterns of information flows made possible by the new technologies of communication, and shifts in the institutional organisation – economic, political and legal – of the means of communication. Sreberny-Mohammadi et al (1997) note that communications

media have become able to escape the boundaries of the nation-state, contributing to new patterns of political action, new forms of economic organisation, crises in the power and identities of nation-states, a rejuvenation of non-state based conceptions of cultural identity, and new questions about the historical relationship between communication, media and democracy.

### Global Technological Transitions

From a *technological* point of view, the introduction of new information and communications technologies has been viewed as an outstanding feature of globalisation. Because technological innovations have been initiated in Western societies, the convergence of broadcasting, telecommunications, and computer industries seems to have facilitated the expansion of Western economic and cultural influence around the world. Traditional NWICO discussions of media gaps between North and South have given way to debates about digital divides between information-rich and information-poor societies. A dwindling public service broadcasting role and an accelerated push for commercially funded media operations have marked the emerging global media environment. Furthermore, technological convergence has led to new global media mega mergers involving conventional mass media and information-based industries.

The rising centrality of information as a basis for sustainable society building has placed further pressures on Third World communities as they struggle to assert their position in a changing world setting. The fast-paced technological diffusion in education, business and government administration has forced many governments to divert sizable portions of their resources to catch up with this trend at the expense of social welfare and development. In Western societies, people speak of knowledge economies and electronic governments, while in Third World countries people speak of warding off the spectacle of starvation and corruption. The gap between the technologically-haves and the have-nots is likely to widen as noted in regularly published United Nations reports on human development in different world regions.

### The MacBride Legacy in Retrospect

Has globalisation, with its political, economic and cultural manifestations rendered the spirit of MacBride obsolete and irrelevant? If the Report's vision of a world bustling with many voices reflected some international unanimity at the time on the coexistence imperative, has globalisation with its gravitation towards homogenisation and exclusion, turned that dream into a nightmare of suppression and subjugation? For certain, the shifting boundaries of world politics and economics from internationalism into globalism were bound to mark extreme departures from the spirit of the MacBride Report that prevailed in the world community some 25 years ago. MacBride's legacy draws on deep belief in co-existence as a panacea for national and international conflicts and tensions. The notion of realising one world with many voices testified to the then evolving beliefs of co-existence on the basis of recognition of the "other's" right to live within political and cultural peculiarities in one world. International concerns over nuclear annihilation between the United States and the former Soviet Union were apparently pushing human fears to their limits by giving in to the notion of diversity within

unity: diversity of cultural and political systems within a universal human entity. While central human values such as freedom and democratic participation formed the backbone of the Report, it was also believed that other competing values rooted in cultural peculiarities of different nations had legitimate places in the emerging international arena. To some extent, one may argue that the MacBride Report's call for cultural diversity was echoing political detent' in the early 1980s and hence reflected a great deal of realism in addressing pressing international issues of the time. In a bipolar world, it was noted, there was no room for tipping the balances in one side's favour because that entailed capsizing the "one world boat" on which humanity was envisioned to be sailing.

The transition from a world of bipolar or multi-polar interests to a uni-polar world of domination as evidenced in globalisation, has apparently generated more chaos and less consensus among players on how the global agenda should be structured. As noted earlier, the 1990s witnessed the outbreak of a wide range of regional, tribal, ethnic, religious and other conflicts that led to more fragmentation within social and national communities. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union has given birth to over 14 new nation-states and so did the demise of Yugoslav Federal Republic. Other examples are abundant in Indonesia, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia and others. The emergence of new states with assumed full sovereignty and international standing has obviously inflated the international community membership. Yet, the issue that has been addressed by this paper is that such a state explosion seems less significant once we realise the failure of emerging entities to assert their national and religious identities outside existing American-style liberalism. President Bush's post-September 11 statement: "You Are With Us OR Against Us" has crystallised the underlying premise of globalisation as a melting pot for the Americanisation of other societies and cultures. Mowlana (1996, 201) notes that while cultural determinants and tensions always existed, they have once again resurfaced as a principal concern for both policy makers and academics. Cross-cultural clashes can be seen in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, ethnic strife throughout the former Soviet empire, migration problems in Western Europe and even within the cultural orientation of trade and business between the West and the East. Within many of these struggles religion provides a fundamental stimulus; Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Shintoism, Confucianism, and Western Protestantism/Calvinism are resurfacing as central to redefining identities.

When juxtaposed against the unfolding drama of globalisation, the MacBride Report seems to represent the antithesis of this emerging age. The fact that globalisation seeks to assimilate – rather than to be shaped by – alternative political and cultural schemes, marks its main departure from the MacBride spirit. As Sardar (1992, 497) notes:

If globalization is fundamental to modernity, and if the globalization of Western culture produces an interdependent world where "there are no others," how then can non-Western cultures contribute to shaping modernity? Moreover if, as Giddens acknowledges, modernity is "inherently future-oriented" and anticipation of the future becomes part of the present, thereby rebounding on how the future actually develops," the future is effectively colonized. Modernity not only ensures a firm Western hold on the present, it also has an equally secure grip on the future.

An enduring question often posed by researchers relates to the intellectual metamorphosis underlying American thinking about co-existence and cultural diversity. Such thinking has obviously spawned a new ideology deriving from dominance and denial of the other. Such uni-directional ideology was not born overnight, but was rather the summation of accumulated legacies of self-presumptuous notions of cultural supremacy and the exclusion of others. Globalisation theorists like Freidman, Huntington, Fukuyama and others have all glorified the virtues of American political, cultural and economic experience that for them marked the end of history. An aura of determinism was associated with such stream of thought that would pre-empt any attempt to produce alternative intellectual recipes for human salvation. We all know that the success of the American experience was based on the historical peculiarity of America as a fortress state more than as an international player. What was working for America may not be relevant for other cultures. The U.S.-waged war against terrorism provides ample evidence in support of this argument. Deep belief in firepower as a way to handle culturally based problems was most likely to be deadlocked. Recognition of the "other" is fundamental to the realisation of peace and security. More than ever before, MacBride's spirit of diversity within unity seems to be the most needed in our time! Mowlana (1996, 202) observes that what is clear is that the collapse of the Soviet Union is neither the end of history nor the end of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall has disappeared but the ethnic walls are emerging and fundamental conflicts will continue to pattern global relations. The US-Soviet Cold War has ended but we are at the threshold of a new cold war; it has already begun and in my opinion will continue as long as the current international system in its political and economic framework constitutes the global scene.

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