

FOREWORD

THE CHANGING GLOBAL MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

INFORMATION AND POWER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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The pace of change in international communications is so swift and its scope so broad that an astute reader of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* might be tempted by the strategic option of skipping this issue. So much is in flux and there is so much else to monitor around the world, our weary reader might calculate, perhaps it would be prudent to wait until the dust settles, and then to look for the definitive review. An understandable impulse, perhaps, but a very big mistake. This issue of the *Fletcher Forum* is, in fact, particularly timely and provocative. The direction of change is now clear, and in that sense the dust has settled. What is not yet clear is how the dramatic changes in world mass communications and telecommunications can be effectively harnessed to serve enduring human values. Much remains to be done. It is a particularly inopportune time to skimp on one's reading in this fast changing field.

The nine articles in this issue are regionally, theoretically and substantively diverse. But we can discern in them a continuous fabric woven of three fundamental and interrelated themes in world communications which have attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners alike. First, the quickening pace of change in communications technology has forced both governments and private industry to reassess their basic beliefs about how telecommunications and mass communications ought to be regulated. Only a decade ago almost all of the world's telecommunications and electronic broadcasting networks were directly or indirectly government controlled. They are now becoming increasingly privatized, deregulated and competitive. Second, the increasingly global character of digital electronic networks and of satellite television combine to alter the meaning of traditional national and regional boundaries. And third, the collapse of the Cold War and its derivative doctrines open up the prospect for new forms and uses of international communication.

Everette Dennis and Henry Grunwald take the broad view, reviewing the global climate for open communication within and across national borders. Grunwald reviews the Talloires Voices of Freedom Declaration with its roots in the 1948 Declaration of the Rights of Man and its new echoes in last year's London "Charter for a Free Press." Dennis outlines the recent history of the

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Lima Declaration of 1990 and the 1992 Conversaciones de Madrid on international communications flows. The field is indeed in a most declarative mood. Why so many international conferences? Grunwald and Dennis explain — the collapse of the cold war and of the retreat of the regulatory impulses of the New World Information Order Movement is welcome indeed, but the growth of a free, open, and independent world press will not follow naturally and effortlessly. Grunwald traces the uneasy development of a free press in Eastern Europe as former underground journalists seek a critical voice in a newly liberated main stream press while their former revolutionary colleagues, now in positions of central authority, feel betrayed and frustrated. Dennis demonstrates that national and regional parochialism in news coverage persists despite great strides in communications technology and press policy. Their convergent theme, echoed by the other contributors, is that despite great gains thus far, much remains to be done to solidify and protect those gains.

The remaining articles focus on critical issues and regional developments in international communications. William Hachten and Nicholas Daniloff focus on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Hachten's mood is celebratory as he describes the decline of the state-controlled press institutions and the unraveling of Leninist press theory. He notes the liberating character of personalized media such as modems, fax machines and videocassettes which resist centralized censorship and control. The awkward position of former state organs draws particular attention. *Neues Deutschland*, for example, until recently the East German official party daily, has changed its style and ideological purpose and is struggling to compete with a vigorous West German press. Despite their best efforts they have lost two thirds of their readership in the last two years. Daniloff, however, is more restrained and concerned, as reflected in the title of his contribution: "Will Russia's Free Press Survive?" He reviews the mixed character of the new Russian Press Law, the economic pressures on the newly independent media and the awkward moments as such notables as Yeltsin, Khazbulatov and Popov struggle to make the theory of an independent press a workable reality in times of crisis.

Chinje and McNulty turn our attention to developments in Africa and North America. The African case is most troubling. Chinje concludes that although the press has emerged as a key player in the demise of both neocapitalist dictatorships and pro-communist totalitarian regimes, progress is halting and slow. In 1990 one survey tracked almost 300 violent attacks on African journalists. A Kenyan reporter described the characteristically difficult and delicate role of the journalist in times of political transition in remarking: "Only after the police come do you know that something you wrote is forbidden." Chinje's four-element typology of censorship offers us a very promising theoretical tool for research in comparative mass communications. An important step beyond the traditional Siebert category scheme, it emphasizes the dynamics of political change.

McNulty's essay picks up on the work of Bernard Cohen, Martin Linsky and Patrick O'Heffernan to trace the increasingly important role of television news

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especially the real-time coverage of world events by the Cable News Network on the practice of American diplomacy. Detailed analyses of the Gulf War, Tiananmen Square and the Soviet coup attempt of 1991 bolster his argument that the instantaneous world interconnection of satellite television has become a central tool of public diplomacy.

Jussawalla and Austin turn to the domain of telecommunications. Jussawalla traces both technical and policy developments in Asia focusing on satellite communications and the trend toward privatization. Of special interest is her analysis of the dynamic tension between the interests of the individual nation states and the transnational corporations and regional associations. Austin focuses on what might at first appear to be a rather technical issue in European telecommunications regulation, the Open Network Provision policy. But ONP turns out to be a critical case in the privatization of world telecommunications and the politics of regional and national policy reform.

Finally Pelle's analysis of European Community broadcasting law focuses on the special Dutch system of broadcasting which for decades represented a unique alternative to government-dominated or commercially-dominated systems. The Dutch case is another example of how satellite and cable technology limit the capacity of centralized authorities to control media content, in this case an attempt to limit the amount of broadcast advertising. But unlike many other cases of government attempts to limit diverse voices, the Dutch authorities have been struggling find new policies and technological schemes to preserve and protect the diversity of Dutch society. It has not proven to be an easy task.

