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THE ALLIANCE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Globalization of politics, economics and culture requires a global communication network. Although it is assumed that global communication network connects various parts of the globe, global media are often criticized as collateral of globalization. Another criticism points out the widespread assessment that global media serve to the interests of the powerful in international politics and therefore having control of global communication network means having a political, economic and cultural mastery.

Mentioning the historical background of international communication, the paper is going to review how international media have been evolved to today's global media. Reviewing international communication theories and their relations with international politics, it is going to be argued that media in the global scale have been closely connected with the struggle for power in international relations and the societal models the powerfuls' interests necessitate.

Key words: Globalization, international politics, global communication, international communication theories.

KÜRESELLEŞME ÇAĞINDA ULUSLARARASI İLETİŞİM İLE ULUSLARARASI POLİTİKANIN İŞBİRLİĞİ

ÖZET

Siyasetin, ekonominin ve kültürün küreselleşmesi, küresel bir iletişim ağının varlığını da zorunlu kılar. Küresel bir iletişim ağının, kürenin her noktasını birbirinden haberdar ettiği varsayımı yapılsa da, küresel medya, sık sık, olumsuz bir çağrışımla anılan küreselleşmenin tamamlayıcısı olarak görülür. Küresel medyanın siyasi ve ekonomik olarak güçlü durumda olanların elinde bulunduğu ve dolayısıyla siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel bir üstünlük kurmanın ve bunu sürdürmenin başlıca araçlarından biri olduğu da, uluslararası politikaya ve küresel iletişim ağlarına yöneltilen eleştirilerden biridir.

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Bu metinde, uluslararası iletişimin tarihsel gelişimine değinilerek, bugün, adına küresel denilen medyanın nasıl oluştuğu üzerinde durulacaktır. Uluslararası iletişim teorilerine ve bu teorilerin içeriklerinin ve ortaya çıkış biçimlerinin uluslararası politikayla bağlantılarına yer verilecek; küresel düzeyde kitle iletişiminin, uluslararası politikadaki güç mücadeleleriyle ve siyasi ve ekonomik gücü elinde bulunduranların öngördüğü toplum modelleriyle yakından bağlantılı olduğu fikri işlenecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Küreselleşme, uluslararası politika, küresel iletişim, uluslararası iletişim teorileri.

Introduction

World wide integration in politics, economics and culture inevitably needs a global communication network in order to globalize the changes and developments taking place in any realm of life. This transnational integration and interdependence, which is called globalization in sum, includes globalization of mass media as a vital element since global economy needs global communication to control and coordinate global markets and only media have the capability of spreading information and opinion around the world – if there is the technological infrastructure- just in a few seconds right after a happening.

Yet, global media have often been accused of being collateral of globalization and its penetration even to the private lives of individuals using media's pervasiveness. This accusation is usually complemented with the blame that media whether national or global are owned by politically and economically powerful groups and media are being exploited as the means of establishing and consolidating political and economic mastery.

It may be easily observed that mass media have been hardly neutral and objective as well as international communication theories and notions suggested. Dominance and dependency in international politics have largely determined international and global communication flow and concepts presented. The paper is going to try to cover historical context of international communication and show how mass media in international and global scale have been evolved into today's media. Speaking of this, international communication theories and their relations with international politics are going to be focused. The paper is going to indicate that mass media have been hardly neutral and international communication which is called global communication now has been closely related with the

concentration of power in international politics and the societal projects the powerful desires.

I. The Need for a Communication Network Is Not New

Even though international communication technology and globalization are contemporary phenomena, cultural interchanges have been provided for more than two millennia. Communication has always been utilized to preserve control over distance since Greek and Roman empires. Medium of communication then were for instance beacon fires, clay tablets and runners, and international or inter-territorial communication was being provided by travelers and traders (Thussu, 2000: 11).

Communication theories, yet, started to appear around 18th century in parallel with the pervasion of capitalism and growth of colonialism which required a communication network for effective administration. While mass society was being emerged, industrializing Europe had been realizing the power of mobilizing information by media to spread and consolidate its mastery over far and near territories (Mattelard and Mattelard, 1998: 5-11). In the mid 19th century, globalization of communication and the global media system had already started to pervade (Pike and Winseck, 2004: 643-645).

Invention of telegraph in the second half of the 19th century was followed by the establishment of news agencies[1]. Twentieth century encountered the rise of popular media and advertising, while satellite technology was expanding to change media landscape forever. The latest stage that has been discussed for a few decades is the "information age" which points out the convergence of information and communication technologies.

However, neither communication technology nor theories on international communication have been independent from international politics and societal needs it imposed. Two world wars and Cold War clearly showed how mass media –radio and television- may turn into a tool of propaganda and manipulate the masses. International or global communication has a dramatic role with its political and economic implications as consolidating ideological polarization of international politics, forming world public opinion, acting as an actor of public

[1] The main news agencies like Associated Press (AP), Reuters and Agence France-Presse (AFP) were established in the first half of the 1800s (Rampal, 2000: 98).

diplomacy, promoting the interests of nations who have the control of means of communication and functioning as an income-providing asset (Thussu, 2000: 11).

In order to understand contemporary international communication atmosphere, its historical journey should be scanned and main theoretical approaches should be remembered to explain its function and genesis.

II. The Shift from British Dominance to US Mastery in Communication Realm

While British Empire had started to leave its place to the USA at the end of the 19th century, it was also handing over its predominance in communication sector. By 1900, British companies dominated two- thirds of the world's cables. Controlling the telegraph and cable networks, Britain had a utopian world view which employed electronic telecommunications in its center (Pike and Winseck, 2004: 645-646). While Britain was able to communicate among all over the empire with its London-centric network, lateral lines were rare. Therefore, when two people wanted to communicate with each other and even though they were geographically close, they had to communicate through London. That is to say, there was an early version of center-periphery relation in British Empire which would be theorized in 1970s (Sawhney, 2000: 43).

British cable companies dominated communication arena till the end of the First World War. After the war, USA started to challenge British dominance on international communication traffic, increasing its control on communication channels by way of leasing cables from Britain. USA was arguing that a new communication system should be built and USA should be in the centre of it. The issue who would control the cables was even discussed in peace talks at Versailles, and British and American interests in global communication networks clashed. USA's desire was to hold a conference to deliberate international communication (Thussu, 2000: 19). As it rejected British cartel and stood for free flow of information which would lead to world peace (Pike and Winseck, 2004: 660), USA's attempt was closely consistent with Wilsonian internationalism which stresses "the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak[2]". Two years before Wilson made his speech that introduced his 14

[2] For the entire text of President Woodrow Wilson's speech delivered in joint session on January 8, 1918, see: Arthur S. Link (1984) et al., eds., The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 45: 536.

points, Americans in fact were hesitant to join the war and Wilson in 1917 had to ask a journalist to prepare a campaign to persuade the public. With news releases, magazine pieces, posters and even movies, in a few months, Americans were ready to fight to make the world a safer and a more democratic place that Wilson principles propose (Vivian, 1991: 295- 296).

Apart from cables, radio as a propaganda tool played a significant role for both the Allies and the Central Powers in the First World War but it was in the Second World War that the impact of radio reached the peak. During the Second World War, media channels were hardly distinguished from propaganda appliances. USA government directed the production of radio propaganda beginning from mid-1930s until 1943 especially introducing the New Deal program of Roosevelt. After 1943, withdrawing from controlling radio broadcast, government left its place to private companies. The integration of political propaganda with entertainment began to spread in these years as corporate sponsors and advertisers, including Hollywood, commenced war propaganda linking it with consumer capitalism (Horten, 2002: 13-39). At the beginning of the war while BBC was broadcasting in seven foreign languages, it had increased to 39 languages at the end. De Gaulle was using BBC's French service to address resisters in occupied France. On the Axis side, Josef Goebbels, Propaganda Minister in Nazi Germany, assumed that radio is a tool of propaganda and so real broadcasting. By 1945, German radio was broadcasting in more than 50 languages. In Italy, Ministry of Print of Propaganda was founded to spread fascist values and form a public opinion. Japan, in addition to South-East and East Asia, was broadcasting to the West coast of the United States aiming to influence Japanese-Americans (Thussu, 2000: 27-28). That is to say, the significance of mass persuasion of mass audience was realized for certain when the two world wars ended.

End of the Second World War and the establishment of a bipolar world between the USA and the Soviet Union affected the form and content and the purpose of international communication. USA claimed to stand for democracy, justice, transparency, freedom, freedom of speech, expression and press and a liberal and free market, while Soviet Union under socialist regime was basically in favor of one-party rule, centrally planned economy, state-control over all enterprises and common ownership of means of production.

Voice of America, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, all state-funded, were used as the instruments of propaganda which was a key element of US foreign policy, in similarity to Soviet foreign policy, in Cold

War. Radios, press, films, books were all pointing out the American way of life which was the ideal form of living. Soviet Union, on the other hand, was especially broadcasting to Eastern bloc and Third World whose state of belonging had vital importance in the struggle for influence. Soviet broadcasts were trying to decrease the impact of Western broadcasting and promote a linkage among world's communist parties indicating the welfare and discipline Soviet policies brought. At the end of 1960s, Moscow Radio had become the world's largest international broadcaster despite US was ahead regarding the whole of US external broadcasting (Hale, 1975: 174).

The ideological polarization was so obvious and categorical that it would not be wrong to argue that the Cold War lasting till the end of 1980s largely determined the conduct of international communication and its theorization. Beginning from 1950s, theories on international system and society would pay attention to communication and the use of media, and communication technology sometimes would be regarded as the determinant factor of progress.

III. Discussions on the Function of International Communication

"Free flow of information" doctrine, presented by USA and its Western allies, was a complementary feature of their discourse which was justifying the mobilization of Western values by means of mass media. "Free flow of information" stipulated that international communication should have global reach and it should carry Western ideals around the globe. The concept was clearly against state regulation and censorship on media and communist use of media for propaganda. Yet, communication technology and media-related capital were intensified in the West and "free flow" largely meant that advertising and marketing their goods in foreign markets. That means there was in fact a one way flow from developed and economically powerful countries to the rest. Therefore, "free flow" discourse was the cover of consolidating the power of the West in the ideological polarity of Cold War (Thussu, 2000: 55- 56). In 1970s, in parallel with the détente period in Cold War, the necessity and possibility of a two-way flow or at least a balanced flow between nations was began to discussed. A survey supported by UNESCO in 1973[3] found that there was a one-way traffic from the big exporting countries in Northern America and Europe to the rest of the

[3] Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis (1973), Television Traffic – A One-Way Street: A Survey and Analysis of the International Flow of Television Programme Material, UNESCO, Vol. 70: 241- 250.

world and there was the dominance of entertainment material in the flow. In the following years, it was consolidated that even though political organization of the world has changed dramatically with the national liberation movements, the old structure of economic and information dependence continued to exist. Unless developing and newly formed nations established their own communication structure, they could not be considered as fully independent (Varis, 1982: 244- 245).

"Free flow of information" was quite consistent with the "modernization theory" which started to be prominent beginning from approximately 1950s. Modernization, the appearance of 'modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence' (Giddens, 1991: 1) in Gidden's words, was also regarded a mission of international communication. Modernization theory asserted that international communication may be a tool of carrying modernity – economic, political and cultural model of the West, in sum- to traditional societies. According to Daniel Lerner[4], a well-known modernization theorist, increasing urbanization tended to increase literacy; increasing literacy tended to increase media exposure; increasing media exposure accompanied economic and political participation (1958:46). Wilbur Schramm, as well, believed that individuals should desire a more modernized life and they should be encouraged to work for it (1964: 130). For Schramm, it was clearly the mass media which would give them this consciousness. In 1970s, the level of media usage started to be taken as criteria of development by modernists. There is no doubt that this international communication aspect of modernization had faith in technology as a main component. On the other hand, there were many other dynamics in traditional or Third World societies that modernization theorists did not calculate. Media, which had been taken as a neutral fact, in effect had essential connections with political, economic and cultural features of a society. Furthermore, media had the potential of becoming an instrument of political and economic elite (Thussu, 2000: 57- 60). In 1990s, when the triumph of Western camp was celebrated and as telecommunication and information technology have been rapidly improving, a more strengthened faith in Western technology would be observed.

[4] Lerner worked for the Psychological Warfare Division of the US Army during the Second World War (Thussu, 2000: 59).

Nevertheless, realizing the political implications of "free flow" and "modernization" theory, an alternative structure was begun to search. "Dependency theory", which appeared in Latin America beginning in 1960s, indicated that discourse of modernization and policies of transnational media and communication corporations were closely linked, and named the existing process as a new colonialism. According to dependency theorists, the reason of Third World's dependence on the West and especially on the USA was the inequalities within the world system which allows developed countries' exploitation of peripheral ones' resources. Although development of underdeveloped was aimed, this was another form of consolidating developed ones' dominance, with Gunder Frank's words "dependent development" in sum. Expressing that capitalism produces wealth and development in core countries, Gunder Frank (1969) declared that capitalism produces poverty and underdevelopment in the satellite countries. Herbert Schiller (1973) argued that there was a new American Empire, which added informational power in addition to its economic and military mastery and the world was experiencing an "electronic invasion" of capitalist American way of life on the lands of traditional and unique cultures. Boyd- Barrett used the term "media imperialism" and stated that influences on the global scale were not reciprocal and USA had a hegemonic power on media industry including ownership, distribution and content (1977: 117).

Johan Galtung strengthened dependency theory adding to it communication imperialism originating from feudal interaction between center and periphery nations. According to Galtung, there are five types of imperialism which are economic, political, military, cultural and communication (1971: 93). Galtung argued that in the world there are center and periphery states, themselves divided into centers and peripheries. While there is harmony of interest between core of the center and core of the periphery, there is a disharmony between periphery of the centre and periphery of the periphery. Moreover, the harmony of interest is more within the centre nation than within the periphery nation. Consistently, Galtung spoke of communication imperialism and suggested that news and information flow from core to the periphery (1971: 83). That is to say it is the core who determines what the news is and so it is the core that sets the agenda for the core and periphery. To be more concrete, it is the transnational media and communication corporations in the West and North.

The rigid polarization of Cold War and the rivalry on making propaganda by communication channels, by the way, led to majority of Third World countries to demand a "New World Information and

Communication Order (NWICO)" in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Third World was complaining about the existing information and communication order indicating the technological gap between centre and periphery, one – way flow of information, dominance of Western-based transnational companies, exploitative and distorted news broadcasting of Western media (Roach, 1997: 94- 97). In 1979, The MacBride Commission under UNESCO was founded in order to work on a new global communication order. In 1980, the Commission submitted its report to UNESCO and so for the first time the issue came to global agenda. In the same year, UNESCO passed a resolution to constitute a NWICO which aims to eliminate the inequalities, negative effects of monopolies and concentrations, obstacles for a free flow and to encourage the plurality of sources and channels of information, freedom of press and respect for the right of people's cultural identity. The Western camp, however, perceived NWICO as a Soviet-inspired union which tries to prevent the spread of liberal Western values. USA withdrew from UNESCO in 1985 and Britain in 1986. Reagan fortified the Voice of America, Radio Europe and Radio Liberty, and added new languages and increased broadcasting hours (Thussu, 2000: 49-50).

The critical theory of Frankfurt School directed the most famous assessment toward the relationship between culture and media coining the term "culture industry" (1972). Stating that in capitalist societies cultural products are produced just as mass-produced industrial goods in assembly-lines, Frankfurt School indicated the industrialization, standardization and commodification of culture. Mass media, which is the key tool of creating this commercial culture, set the agenda and manipulate the consumers to the conformity cultural industry provides and shadow their own political, economic and social interests. Jürgen Habermas (1989), a follower of critical theory, proposed "public sphere", the idea of an arena, independent of government and in which public opinion is formed by free access of all citizens. Yet, Habermas was well aware that the idealized version of public sphere could not be easily reached in the 20th century in which the dominance of capitalism decreased the autonomy of public sphere by what he calls "refeudalization" (195). Habermas says although mass media could create a public sphere in parallel with the increasing access to information and opinion, in a market-driven communication sector media corporations could only produce based on the lowest common denominator (192). Especially with the rise of Internet, it has been discussed whether a global public sphere in which global problems are examined by global access is

possible, there is no doubt that Internet has its own shortcomings as they will be discussed in conclusion.

Yet, before discussing the contemporary situation of international or global communication, the notion information society should be explored. There is no doubt that there is plenty of works stressing on the importance of communication and information technology but here only a few ones will be mentioned in order to point out the general characteristics of this new type of society.

IV. The Latest Stage: The Information Age

It is widely believed that the age we live in is the "Information age." Information age points out a societal structure in which telecommunication and information technology are converged and an information revolution emerged. Even though he did not use the term information technology, placing the communication technology in the centre, Marshall McLuhan (1964) analyzed the influence of communication technology on societies and has come up with the idea that the form of a medium had more significant impact than its content. His famous expression "the medium is the message" and his widely celebrated foresight "global village" were the obvious indicators of his technological determinism. According to McLuhan, electronic media makes the world a smaller place where people can communicate on a global scale as if they are living in the same village. Eliminating time and space barriers, electronic media, for McLuhan, turned people back to their tribal experience made up of intimate relations. Although McLuhan could hardly imply Internet in 1960s, global village recently has been often used to draw attention to the impact of Internet.

For Daniel Bell (1973), who is one of the most enthusiastic writers on information society, it also requires a transformation from industrial society to the post-industrial society in which service industry workers are more than those work in manufacturing. Stating that only USA seemed to move to this post-industrial era, Bell adds that there will be new technical elites and so a new type of social stratification. Alvin Toffler (1980) also argued that post-industrial society is the third wave which industrial societies experiencing the second wave have started to move into in the 1950s. According to Toffler, while industrial societies are characterized by social, educational and industrial standardization, specialization, synchronization, centralization, concentration and maximization; post-industrial society are marked by heterogenization, destandardization, demassification, individualization of products, education, lifestyles etc. by help of new technology.

In the first volume of his "Information Age" trilogy, Castells (1996) mentioned the globalization of economy, technology and communication, and suggested the term "network society". According to Castells, the term he proposes is the social structure or the substance of information society which has electronically processed information networks in its centre. In network society, state's authority is decreased as well as the power of ideology, and regional and supranational bodies gain prominence with their flexible and highly adaptable natures. Although information technology had a significant role in his analysis, Castells was cautious about technological determinism. Supporting that technological progress cannot be perceived as positive or negative, Castells argued that technology, including communication technology, adapts the conditions of society and is used accordingly, instead of transforming the whole structure (500-509).

V. Conclusion: Is Globalization a Progressive Phase or a Continuum of Same Old Functional System?

Media are often called fourth estate or fourth branch of government implying that media should be independent in reporting on the government and act as a watchdog on behalf of the citizens (Vivian, 1991: 445- 446). However political economy approach shows that the subject is trapped among a network of effectual dynamics which directly or indirectly determines its functioning. Robert W. McChesney states that political economy of communication includes two dimensions (2000: 109). First, it analyzes how media systems and content strengthen, challenge and affect class and social relations. Second, the way ownership, support mechanisms and government policies influence media behavior and content is examined. It would not be appropriate to say that this is a paper on political economy. Yet, it is clear that any communication channel and media have been hardly fully independent from politics, economics and social structure between and within nations, as the mentioned periods and communication practices displayed.

Beginning from the late 20th century, international media systems have been becoming global or transnational in both their reach and ownership. Globalization and its communication aspect have been discussed a lot in parallel with this expansion. With a rough distinction, on the one hand there are proponents who assume that globalization may increase economic, cultural and social interaction between nations and so it helps to create a smaller world in which democracy, education, wealth and progress are handled easier and formation of world public opinion is feasible. One of the

mostly given examples by proponents is the Internet with 1,463,632, 361[5] users and its limitless flow of data including voice, text and picture.

Yet, if the most distinctive characteristic of globalization is the globalization of markets, its definition becomes important. Richard A. Gershon explains that globalization is driven by world wide regulation and privatization trends, technological change and market integration, and globalization of markets requires integration of transnational business, nation-states and technologies operating at high speed. Transnational media (TNMC) is an indispensable element of global capitalism and what differentiate it from other transnational corporations is its commodities which are information and entertainment. TNMCs promote the informational and ideological atmosphere that allow global market interaction occur (2003: 51- 52).

Schiller, as well, warns that understanding globalization as a process which everybody is participating and in the same degree, speed and timing is an illusion. He argues that global powers use the globe to market their products and distribute them everywhere in the globe. Schiller (1973) mentions the existence of five widespread myths regarding corporate-controlled media: Myth of individualism and personal choice, myth of neutrality, myth of unchanging human nature, myth of the absence of social conflict and myth of media pluralism. According to Schiller, media, especially after Second World War, produce international support for global domination of USA and its neoliberal ideology.

Internet and digital communication, on the other hand, are often referred as a digital revolution which may surpass the power of traditional media industries and reinforce individual and national participation. Yet, while it is difficult to argue that Internet and digital developments pose an immediate and foreseeable threat to the power of big media corporations (Herman and McChesney, 1997), the information highway, despite the chances it may provide, "will be grafted onto the global capitalist system", since technology is not neutral and what it may lead to is largely determined by political, economic and social characteristics of the society (Dawson & Foster, 1998: 57). Digital divide, the inequality of access to the computer-based technologies, especially to the Internet, which appears as both the cause and result of knowledge gap among nations and individuals show that

[5] For the Internet usage statistics, see: Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics (2008). Internet World Stats. Retrieved October 31, 2008 from http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm.

what is more important than the number of Internet connections is the consequences of both connection and lack of connection. Internet is not just a technology but the infrastructure of informational power, knowledge generation and networking capacity (Castells, 2001). Therefore, the dominance of information-rich societies over information-poor ones and the relative information-poverty may be said to condition the global relations in the 21st century.

Therefore, global media network has not appeared spontaneously in parallel with the economic expansion and technological inventions but have been built as a crucial component of a new political, economic and societal structure. Yet, the question whether global communication network and information technology have an enhancing potential which promotes harmony or they will maintain to reinforce existing structures of power will be comprehended in the following decades.

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