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The New World Information and Communication Order: An Idea that Refuses to Die

This topic leads us to a particular chapter in media history, dealing with international politics as much as media studies. The concept of a "new world information and communication order," known as NWICO, became a leading theme in global media policy debates from the 1970s until the 1990s covering the period from heights of decolonization to the collapse of communism. The debates started in diplomatic forums of the developing countries, particularly the *Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)*[1], and extended to professional and academic circles so that in the 1980s NWICO was part and parcel of the discourse on the media's role in society and the world at large. By the new millennium, however, it disappeared from the agenda to be replaced by concepts such as media globalization. In the 2010s, NWICO already belongs to the history of the field – a history that keeps re-emerging under different aegis.

NWICO is quite a hot chapter in the history of the field. It connects the media, and the study of the media, to the geopolitical struggles between the American-led "West" and the Soviet-led "East," on the one hand, and the industrialized "North" and the developing "South," on the other. NWICO became the buzzword for media controversies in the final period of the Cold War and in the transition to a post-Cold War world. However, NWICO did not only serve as a political context to media and their policies at the time; it was also a catalyst for a paradigmatic shift in international communication studies. The present author even compared NWICO and a critical variant of communication research as two tracks of the same movement (Nordenstreng 1993).

In brief, the concept was born in an aggressive wave of decolonization spearheaded by NAM in the first part of the 1970s; it was consolidated during an information war, with a counterattack by the Western powers in the mid-1970s, followed by a diplomatic truce in the late 1970s; then it was shunned by another Western corporate offensive in the 1980s. Yet its idea carried over to the new millennium, no longer as a controversial concept but embedded in a number of key issues in global media policy and study.

Birth in a decolonization offensive

By the early 1970s, the developing countries had accumulated a great deal of political power and economic potential, with the support of such organizations as NAM and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). All this created a new relation of forces in the world arena, already under pressure from the socialist part of the world, leading to such manifestations as the oil crisis and the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO)[2] – all of which worked against the vested interests of the Western countries. Another corollary to this offensive against the West was a polarization of the Arab-Israeli conflict, reflected, not only in a war between the parties, but also in the UN resolution by which the majority of the international community determined Zionism as a form of racism[3].

In this situation, it appeared that a new chapter in world history was in the making, and it was not by chance that the phrase "new order" became popular. After all, it implies a radical analysis of the world; the concept of order points at a global structure not far from Lenin's theory of imperialism. It

suggested a radical program to change the world; the notion of "new" may well be interpreted as a call for war against the "old order." Consequently, the basic pattern was that the West was on the defensive and the developing countries, supported by the socialist countries, were on the offensive.

Under these conditions the idea of decolonization was well established as a political program and an intellectual concept. But before 1973, it was not applied to the sphere of information and culture. This occurred systematically in NAM platforms during 1976: first in a symposium on information in Tunis, then in a conference of information ministers in New Delhi, and finally in the Summit in Colombo.

The first event to articulate media and communication in terms of an international order was the *NAM Symposium on Information in Tunis* (Tunisia) in March 1976. The resolution of this Symposium includes the following paragraph:

> Since information in the world shows a disequilibrium favouring some and ignoring others, it is the duty of the non-aligned countries and the other developing countries to change this situation and obtain the decolonisation of information and initiate a new international order in information. (quoted in Nordenstreng 1984a: 10)

The preceding paragraph of the resolution speaks about emancipation of the developing countries from "structures of imperialist power", which should be seen in the general context of what was expressed already by the 4th *NAM Summit in Algiers* (Algeria) in 1973: "the activities of imperialism are not confined solely to the political and economic fields, but also cover the cultural and social fields", demanding NAM to take "concerted action in the field of mass communication" (ibid.: 9).

Actually such a view of placing mass communication within the structures of "imperialism" was quite common at the time also among critical scholars and development activists in the USA and Europe. Even the President of Finland – a capitalist country pursuing a neutral foreign policy between East and West – used the term when drawing attention to the structural inequalities in the media field, nationally and internationally: "Just as within Finland there is a situation in the press described as a bourgeois hegemony, on the international arena there is a state of affairs called communication imperialism." (Kekkonen 1974: 44)[4]

Yet the prime mover of the NWICO concept was NAM, which followed up the Tunis Symposium already in July 1976 when the *NAM Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi* (India) established "Press Agencies Pool of the Non-Aligned Countries" and adopted a landmark "New Delhi Declaration." It serves as a textbook presentation of the reasoning behind NWICO:

1. The present global information flows are marked by a serious inadequacy and imbalance. The means of communication information are concentrated in a few countries. The great majority of countries are reduced to being passive recipients of information which is disseminated from a few countries.

2. This situation perpetuates the colonial era of dependence and domination. It confines judgements and decisions on what should be known, and how it should be made known, into the hands of a few.

3. The dissemination of information rests at present in the hands of a few agencies located in a few developed countries, and the rest of the peoples of the world are forced to see each other, and even themselves, through the medium of these agencies.

4. Just as political and economic dependence are legacies of the era of colonialism, so is the case of dependence in the field of information, which in turn retards the achievement of political and economic growth.

5. In a situation where the means of information are dominated and monopolized by a few, freedom of information really comes to mean freedom of these few to propagate information in the manner of their choosing and the virtual denial to the rest of the right to inform and be informed objectively and accurately.

6. Non-Aligned countries have, in particular, been the victims of this phenomenon. Their endeavours, individual and collective, for world peace, justice, and for the establishment of a n equitable international economic order, have been under-played or misrepresented by international news media. Their unity has sought to be eroded. Their efforts to safeguard their political and economic independence and stability have been denigrated… (quoted in Nordenstreng 1984a: 10-11).

As pointed out by the present author (Nordenstreng 1984b: 29), this declaration presents a fundamental challenge to the traditional libertarian theory of the press in three respects. First, it implies that *laissez-faire* will lead to monopolization and create neo-colonial dependence. Second, it shows how insufficient is an abstract right to information without ensuring the material means to put that right into practice. Third, the information in the media is given explicit content qualifications: it should be objective and accurate.

The New Delhi Declaration was endorsed a month later by the 5th *NAM Summit in Colombo* (Sri Lanka), where 87 members of the movement – over half of the United Nations (UN) membership – resolved: "A new international order in the fields of information and mass communications is as vital as a new international economic order." (Nordenstreng 1984a: 11) Linking NWICO with NIEO further galvanized the concept turning it to a highly political issue in the global arena. The linkage also highlighted a powerful common denominator: the idea of collective self-reliance (Pavlic and Hamelink 1985).

The political history of decolonization would not be complete without noting that the socialist bloc of the East, although formally a separate third party of the power game, was a kind of "natural ally" of NAM as they both were directed against the West and its capitalist interests in the world. This became particularly clear in the media field, where in the early 1970s the Soviet Union had initiated a project to establish regulatory relations between international media such as news agencies and foreign broadcasts, on the one hand, to the principles of international law and professional ethics, on the other. A flagship of this project was the *Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO* which was drafted at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) between 1970 and 1978, with NAM and the Soviet-led East sharing the same strategic interests against the corporate-dominated West (Nordenstreng 1984a)[5].

As far as the history of ideas is concerned, a central intellectual ingredient in the raise of NWICO was the concept of freedom – how the value-loaded idea of press freedom was suddenly brought under a critical light. Powerful input to a critical look came from Herbert Schiller's account of the genesis of the American free flow doctrine as an instrument of cultural domination (Schiller 1976).

A sharp look at the same issue from the South was provided by a veteran journalist in India, D.R. Mankekar in his books with telling titles *One-Way Free Flow* (1978) and *Whose Freedom? Whose Order?* (1981). A Western position was articulated by a British journalist, Rosemary Righter in her *Whose News? Politics, the Press and the Third World* (1978). (For and overview of the free flow doctrine in global media policy, see Nordenstreng 2011.)[6]

Consolidation in an information war[7]

The mounting media-related activities of NAM, UN and UNESCO gave rise to an opposition in the West, particularly among private media circles. Accordingly, the American publishers established the *World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC)*[8] "to wage an eventually successful global struggle in and around intergovernmental organizations to beat back authoritarian proposals for a restrictive 'new world information and communication order'". The WPFC's first battle against UNESCO was waged at the *Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean*, held in San José (Costa Rica) in 1976. Although the moment was favourable to UNESCO's pursuit of a modestly "anti-imperialist" line, the WPFC succeeded in making the concept of a national communication policy controversial, thus impairing the momentum of this program of UNESCO.

The next battleground was *UNESCO's General Conference in Nairobi* in 1976, convened for the first time in Africa. The developing countries came there with the freshly articulated NAM position, and the socialist countries were prepared to push through the Mass Media Declaration as drafted by an intergovernmental meeting which failed to reach a consensus and instead voted with an East-South majority, leaving the West in a defeated minority. The Western countries and media proprietors were most concerned in this draft about a reference to the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism and about an article suggesting that states are responsible for the activities in the international sphere of all mass media under their jurisdiction (as determined by international law).

Consequently, Nairobi became the scene of unprecedented diplomatic and non-governmental lobbying. In order to understand the events at UNESCO it is important to recall that at the same time, in 1976-77, the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations prepared special reports and organized hearings on global media policies, and these activities were no longer typical manifestations of the counterattack waged by lobbies such as WPFC. While certainly motivated by the same fundamental interests, they advocated a new and more flexible approach – a strategy of selective accommodation to, and active partnership with, the forces confronting the West. Especially outspoken in this respect was the Kroloff and Cohen Report, which begins by observing: "Whether we like it or not, there will be a 'New World Information Order'," and continues:

> Worldwide the "New World Information Order" could be good or bad. As the situation now stands, the United States has more to lose than any other nation as the "Order" becomes a fact. It should be noted, however, that the United States need not be a loser if appropriate actions are taken.

Indeed, the information war proceeded to a new stage, after the NAM offensive and the Western counterattack – a truce. In fact, before and during Nairobi 1976 – while the Western press and private broadcasting interests kept campaigning against UNESCO – Western diplomats were busy suggesting deals to the developing countries. The political purpose was to play down the draft Mass Media Declaration, which by that time had become a symbol for a consideration of the principles and contents of the mass media within an anti-Western context. By and large, the new strategy

followed the old formula: If you cannot beat them, join them! Also, the formula of divide and rule was employed in response to the fact that it had been precisely the united front of the developing countries, backed by the socialist countries, which had brought about the political defeats for the West during the first stage.

It was such a situation of conflicting political strategies that led to the compromise whereby the Mass Media Declaration was shelved for another two years and an international commission was established to study global problems of communication – to be headed by Sean MacBride. It was a clever tactical move by UNESCO's then Director-General Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow to set up a "reflexion group of wise men" as a way to avoid a political crisis, which had accumulated at UNESCO due to mounting disagreements about the Organization's competence to determine normative standards for the media.

The conflicting strategies of Nairobi 1976 were further elaborated by the time of the next *UNESCO General Conference in Paris* in 1978. An outspoken statement was given by the head of the U.S. delegation, Ambassador John E. Reinhardt (an African-American representing Jimmy Carter's Administration), who in his address contrasted "restrictive declarations" against "positive cooperation" and made a call for "a more effective program of action," including "American assistance, both public and private, to suitably identified regional centers of professional education and training in broadcasting and journalism in the developing world," as well as "a major effort to apply the benefits of advanced communications technology, specifically communications satellites, to economic and social needs in the rural areas of developing nations." There was little new in this program, but its launching at UNESCO as a kind of political demonstration gave rise to the concept of a "Marshall Plan of Telecommunications," muted by those developing world representatives who were not quite convinced of the sincerity of U.S. intentions. In fact, this led two years later to the establishment of the *International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).*

Obviously the U.S. 'carrot' was designed to play down – even to bury – the Mass Media Declaration, as well as other political manifestations of the new order. However, the fact that the Declaration was finally adopted, only three weeks after launching this "Marshall Plan," shows that the Western strategy did not quite succeed. It did not stop the developing countries, with the help of socialist countries, from pushing "restrictive declarations." It helped the Western side only as a leverage in the bargaining process over the formulations of the Declaration. At this period of accommodation, the United States did not deploy its 'stick' – for example, by threatening to withdraw from UNESCO.

Another compromise on the same U.S.-developing countries basis was a resolution, adopted by consensus at the 1978 General Conference, concerning the MacBride Commission. This resolution appreciated the interim report which the Commission had prepared for the General Conference, and invited, among other things, the members of the Commission "to address themselves, in the course of preparing their final report, to the analysis and proposal of concrete and practical measures leading to the establishment of a more just and effective world information order." Although this resolution did not contain explicit "free flow" references, it obviously met the Western interest in alluring the developing countries to turn attention away from fundamental principles and content considerations (such as the Draft Declaration) to practical cooperation (such as the "Marshall Plan").

Consequently, Nairobi 1976 and Paris 1978 showed that Western counteroffensive was effective by stopping the offensive of the South and East from continuing with their automatic majority. On the other hand, the developing countries and the socialist countries also got their part of the

compromise. The Mass Media Declaration was finally adopted by consensus in November 1978.[9] **And the MacBride Commission was mandated to examine the problems of communication in order to get "towards a new more just and more efficient world information and communication order," as the subtitle of the Commission's Report was formulated.** These were clearly compromises between the capitalist West, socialist East and the non-aligned South of the time. There was room for compromise – a truce in an information war – in the late 1970s, largely due to the East-West détente and the oil crisis, which supported those Western strategists who preferred carrot to stick.

The UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade in 1980 was historical, not only because it formally established the IPDC, but also because it brought together all aspects of the great debate of the 1970s, including its most controversial elements concerning the conceptual and political substance of NWICO. This took place around a resolution on the MacBride Report. Patient and painful negotiations between and within various geopolitical groupings led to a consensus on that resolution, articulating the most elaborate 'definition' of NWICO ever achieved at the UN system:

> (a) this new world information and communication order could be based, among other considerations, on:
>
> (i) elimination of the imbalances and inequalities which characterize the present situation;
> (ii) elimination of the negative effects of certain monopolies, public or private, and excessive concentrations;
> (iii) removal of the internal and external obstacles to a free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and ideas;
> (iv) plurality of sources and channels of information;
> (v) freedom of the press and information;
> (vi) the freedom of journalists and all professionals in the communication media, a freedom inseparable from responsibility;
> (vii) the capacity of developing countries to achieve improvement of their own situations, notably by providing their own equipment, by training their personnel, by improving their infrastructures and by making their information and communications media suitable to their needs and aspirations;
> (viii) the sincere will of developed countries to help them attain these objectives;
> (ix) respect for each people's cultural identity and the right of each nation to inform the world public about its interests, its aspirations and its social and cultural values;
> (x) respect for the right of all peoples to participate in international exchanges of information on the basis of equality, justice and mutual benefit;
> (xi) respect for the right of the public, of ethnic and social groups and of individuals to have access to information sources and to participate actively in the communication process;
>
> (b) this new world information and communication order should be based on the fundamental principles of international law as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations...

It is not difficult to see that, under paragraph (a), a great deal of diplomatic trading had resulted in favoring the Western "free flow" position. However, all of these 11 points are merely among other considerations on which the new order *could* be based. Under (b), on the other hand, is a brief but crucial statement on which the new order *should* be based. The latter endorses the general position that international law constitutes the basis for all international relations, including those in the field

of journalism and mass communication. Accordingly, not only did all the Member States (including USA at the time) approve the idea of defining the new order, but its overall orientation was fixed to the UN principles of international relations. This may not appear, at first sight, as a particularly significant position, but on closer examination it is the most essential element of the whole resolution.

Actually the core of NWICO is that it places the mass media within the framework of international law, as clearly pointed out by its early advocates (Masmoudi 1979; Osolnik 1980). In point of fact, this is not something new but rather an endorsement of a long-standing principle. Likewise, the very concept of an international order is already to be found in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes not only the celebrated Article 19 on the right to freedom of opinion and expression but also Article 28: “Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.”

Therefore, an essential part of the NWICO substance is composed of existing instruments of international law. The first inventory of international law relating to the mass media – both their freedoms and responsibilities – was made by Hilding Eek, a Swedish Emeritus Professor of International Law (Eek, 1979). It appeared in a reader with other chapters by respected American authorities showing that the media and their freedom are indeed governed by a well established framework of international law. It was typical, then, that there was need for a sourcebook with full text of relevant international instruments (Nordenstreng et al. 1986).

Decline in a corporate offensive

The Belgrade consensus of 1980 was not long lasting. The truce of information war in 1977-80 was broken when the leading Western powers shifted towards a neoconservative approach.[…]

In summary, the balance of global forces changed drastically soon after the MacBride Report was issued in 1980. Ronald Reagan’s advent as President in early 1981 turned the USA from multilateralism to a unilateral employment of power politics, with a relative weakening of the USSR and the NAM. The truce of the 1970s was followed by a new Western offensive in the 1980s. At this stage all the elements of compromise which were earlier regarded as valuable and honourable suddenly went out of fashion and even turned into liability risks. Thus M'Bow lost his job and NWICO as well as MacBride became taboos at UNESCO.

In a broader context of Western politics, UNESCO was regarded as a burden, whereby the Reagan administration decided that the USA would leave the Organization, followed by Thatcher’s UK. Here it is important to realize that the American and British departures from UNESCO were not caused primarily by NWICO, MacBride or M'Bow, but that the true reason was a strategic shift away from multilateralism – a warning to the international community that leading Western powers would not be outvoted by the majority of the world’s nations. As expressed by a former Assistant Secretary of the State of the Carter administration, UNESCO was “the Grenada of the United Nations” – referring to the U.S. invasion of that small island which was a relatively small target to demonstrate what can be done on a larger scale if the interests of the big power are not respected.

The corporate offensive dominated the whole decade of the 1980s, but next to that were uncompromised positions of the NWICO advocates. While the concept of NWICO led an uncompromised life within the NAM as well as among many representative NGOs, its destiny in the universal inter-governmental forums of UNESCO and UN was more complicated and

compromised. Along the 1980s, it became under increasingly heavy pressure from the Western governments, led by the Reagan Administration. Yet despite all the maneuvering and blackmail – including the U.S. and UK withdrawal from UNESCO – the concept survived until the end of the 1980s.

For the Western corporate forces NWICO was a “bad idea that refuses to die,” as the media lobbies used to say.

Stalemate in the 1990s

A new stage of the global media debate emerged in the 1990s when the NWICO debate, including references to the MacBride Report, began to wane from intergovernmental platforms. In UNESCO, NWICO was not supposed to be even mentioned, and the UN General Assembly just recognized “the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process” (Gerbner et al. 1993: xii). NAM for its part lost a good deal of steam when one of its central members, Yugoslavia, got disintegrated and the collapse of communism brought a fundamental change to the bipolar world where NAM had entered as the third force. Nevertheless, NAM continued as an organization (see note 1).

Moreover, a completely new version of the new order was introduced by President George Bush as a vision for the U.S. strategy in the post-Cold War world and particularly in the Persian Gulf War against Iraq in early 1991. Suddenly the USA was promoting the concept of a New World Order – including an information order dominated by the CNN – and the U.S. was not at all concerned about its 'politicization' or poor definition. Already before this, Schiller and others had sarcastically observed that a new information order has in fact been established – by the transnational corporations. Indeed, we can say that by the early 1990s NWICO “came about – in reverse” (Gerbner et al. 1993: xi). Cees Hamelink offers a gloomy update on this development:

> The enemies of the egalitarian democratic ideal are those forces that actively shape the new world order that is currently emerging – largely in response to the collapse of Communism. The new world order poses a serious threat to the project of an egalitarian democracy since it exacerbates existing inequalities and results in a deep erosion of people's liberty to achieve self-empowerment. Since the new world order is not welcome everywhere, it also provokes a fierce opposition in forms of national, ethnic and religious fundamentalism that – ironically – equally threaten the prospect of an egalitarian democratic arrangement of world communication (Hamelink 1995: 31).

All this makes the narrative of the great debate quite paradoxical. Not only did the new world order came about in reverse but also the collapse of communism brought a drastic shift: the radical as well as reformist forces behind NWICO were run over by emerging new corporate interests. Globalization was the overall keyword for this stage in development of the real world as well as in the media debates. Globalization was a complex and controversial concept, opening to media people new prospects for both threats and opportunities.

Yet, NWICO as an idea did not disappear. While the political context has drastically changed, the issues involved remain more or less the same. This is obvious when reading the declarations on promoting “independent and pluralistic media” which UNESCO has produced in regional conferences since 1995 (Windhoek, Alma Ata, Santiago, Sanaa and Sofia). Moreover, prospects opened by a global information society and its challenge to national sovereignty did not bury but rather rehabilitated the NWICO idea. However, it was no longer called NWICO; the terminology

and rhetoric was changing, but the substance mostly remained and just was complemented by new elements of technological and social development.

An important chapter in the history of NWICO was the MacBride Round Table on Communication established by a number of journalism and media related NGOs. The first Round Table was held in Harare (Zimbabwe) in October 1989 – just before the Berlin Wall fell down. This was a strategic move to carry on the NWICO tradition, in the ecumenical spirit of the MacBride Commission, as a coalition of professional and academic supporters of the idea without political pressures from governments or intergovernmental organizations. Yet NAM served as a friendly partner with Zimbabwe's Minister of Foreign Affairs addressing the Harare Round Table (the host country was at the time also President of NAM).

The MacBride Round Table met annually throughout the decade, helping to keep NWICO on the professional and academic agenda.[10] It was established to overcome the discontinuation of the UN-UNESCO Round Table – to ensure that the NWICO debate would be carried on – but it was inspired also by a more general idea of creating an NGO coalition as an expression of the grassroots voice and as a mobilizer of the professional and citizen associations in support of NWICO. In hindsight it is obvious that there was a general trend away from governments and official political actors toward the so-called "civil society" – not only regarding NWICO but also in several other socio-political matters.

The NWICO idea survived to the new millennium but it re-emerged with different phrases at the *World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)*[11]. NWICO has an important place in textbooks on international and global communication (e.g., McPhail 2006; Thussu 2006).

Conclusions and lessons

The preceding review of the NWICO debate permits several conclusions. The following four were drawn already 1984 (Nordenstreng 1984b) but they are still valid. […]

As far as lessons to be learned from the NWICO history are concerned, here are three:

First, *NWICO was not really about media and communication but basically about "high politics."* The first lesson to be learned about the NWICO story is indeed that the determining factors are socio-economic and geopolitical forces rather than intellectual and moral arguments. In other words, *power rather than reason* sets the rules of debate. However impressive your facts, and however persuasive your arguments, you will not gain recognition in the global debate arena unless you are backed by significant political forces. The rise of NWICO in the 1970s was facilitated by a combined force of the Second and Third World: Its fall in the 1990s was likewise a consequence of their disintegration. This said, however, we have to remember the intellectual reflection does influence the course of political events. Yet, in the final instance, it is the political that determines the global (political) agenda.

An extension of this lesson is the observation that the U.S. (and U.K.) withdrawal from UNESCO was not based on NWICO or any other single issue but on an overall strategy shift facilitated by the changing relation of global forces. In this perspective it is misleading and superficial to explain the withdrawals through exclusive reference to NWICO; this is a myth celebrated by the Western lobbies that waged the campaign against UNESCO.

The anti-NWICO campaign itself serves as an instructive case of Orwellian double-talk: NWICO was attacked as a curb on media freedom, whereas the concept was designed to widen and deepen the freedom of information by increasing its balance and diversity on a global scale. In reality, NWICO was an idealistic instrument of diplomacy; no Third World dictators used it as an excuse for suppressing media. The campaign was an ideologically apologetic exercise by private media proprietors, and it became effective only because of the unforeseen power with which it was waged. In this sense it is justified to call the campaign a "Big Lie."

The second main lesson is in fact inspired by a critical assessment of the anti-NWICO campaign and its effects: *a global idea is the more durable, the more articulate its substance in public discourse.* In other words, *conceptual clarity fuels resistance* to changing political winds. It is essential, then, that a progressive idea should be articulated not only as a political slogan but as a resolution, law or even as a scientific theory. A poorly conceptualized idea can be easily suppressed once the political forces behind it decline, whereas an idea which is grounded in in-depth analysis and is widely known to the general public is quite resilient. For example, environmental issues would have been removed long ago from the public agenda by the strong forces of finance and commerce, were it not that environmentalism was such a well articulated field (thanks to Greenpeace, etc.).

True, these two main lessons are somewhat contradictory: One stresses politics over the intellectual, the other vice versa. Nonetheless, this is the complex and sometimes paradoxical nature of the history of important ideas. Exemplifying this, the NWICO debate provides us with a particularly paradoxical case, simultaneously containing conceptual clarity and poor intellectual elaboration. The MacBride Report itself is typical in this regard: containing at one and the same time a wealth of factually accurate description and analytically incisive distinctions of the world's communication conditions, but also conceptually mediocre and poorly defined accounts of media reality. Likewise, UNESCO's Mass Media Declaration stands as a landmark of conceptual elaboration and a monument to political compromise.

In hindsight, I would self-critically say that the NWICO concept remained relatively shallow and its relation to the big narratives of modernization, dependency, imperialism, etc., was left without sufficient articulation. In the mid-1990s, it is indeed time to thoroughly reflect upon the paradigms of old and new world orders, the scientific marketplace of ideas; for example, by Andre Gunder Frank, Johan Galtung and Immanuel Wallerstein (in Nordenstreng and Schiller 1993) and by Majid Tehranian and others among the papers presented at the 6th MacBride Round Table in Honolulu in 1994 (in Vincent et al. 1999).

The third and final lesson is that *NWICO's significance lies in the debate and its lessons rather than in the actual phenomena of communication and related global structures*. The whole history of NWICO offers little in terms of changing media structures and flows — except, perhaps, "in reverse" with increasing concentration, imbalance, etc. — whereas it offers a lot in terms of conceptual thinking and awareness about the role of the media and their relation to global forces.

To be sure, some media realities have changed towards the NWICO objectives. For example, alternative news and feature agencies have emerged and survived; regional and sub-regional centers

have somewhat diversified the global patterns of one-way flow; and journalists in the North have been sensitized to appreciate foreign cultures. Or is this really so; aren't there countertrends with ever greater ethnocentrism in 'fortress Europe' and other new regional blocs? Obviously there are conflicting trends, including paradoxical developments, and hence it is hard to generalize and to be dogmatic. Moreover, it is hard to keep up with the changing media landscape, as no one is systematically monitoring the global state of affairs in communication structures and flows.

Yet it is safe to say that the issues raised by the NWICO debate by and large remain valid in the contemporary world. Take the very title of the 1978 Mass Media Declaration: "...concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War." All aspects, except Apartheid, are still relevant. In point of fact, the question of racism and xenophobia in the media is much more topical today than two decades ago — the Council of Europe and the European Union passing declarations with a less liberal tone than provided by the UNESCO compromise. Ethnic and religious "hate speech" and war propaganda are not just words in political resolutions but bitter realities around the world — not only in Bosnia and Ruanda but also in the centers of the North.

Likewise, the issue of information sovereignty is far from resolved or obsolete. The difference is only that it is no longer a simple confrontation of the West with the socialist and developing countries, but today it is also a West-West confrontation, notably between the USA and Europe over TV program quotas. In general, the prospects of the "information superhighway" in the West, combined with developments in the newly liberalized East, raise pretty much the same old questions, although mostly with a new rhetoric.

However, there are also fundamental changes which have to be admitted and closely attended to, particularly the decreasing importance of the state, on the one hand, and the growing importance of the citizen, on the other. The prospect opened by these combined developments is captured by the concept of *global civil society* (Nordenstreng and Schiller 1993: 463). This is the framework that will surround future NWICO debates — whatever the labels used.

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Notes

[1] The movement of non-aligned countries started in an Asian-African conference in Bandung in 1955 and was consolidated in the first NAM summit in Belgrade in 1961, with a key role played by Presidents Sukarno of Indonesia, Nehru of India, Nkrumah of Ghana, Nasser of Egypt and Tito of Yugoslavia. After the collapse of communism, Yugoslavia has ceased to exist, while South Africa entered as a new member hosting the 12th summit in 1998, followed by summits in Malesia 2003 and in Cuba 2006. The 15th summit was held in Egypt 2009, see http://www.namegypt.org/en/Pages/default.aspx

[2] See http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/071/94/IMG/NR007194.pdf?OpenElement

[3] See http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/000/92/IMG/NR000092.pdf?OpenElement

[4] President Urho Kekkonen's speech was delivered at the Symposium on the International Flow of Television Programmes held at the University of Tampere, May 21-23, 1973. The materials of this Symposium were used by the Tunisian hosts when preparing the NAM Symposium on Information. Finland had the status of "invited guest" at NAM and also attended the Tunis Symposium as an observer (represented by the present author).

[5] This book contains a detailed account of the preparation of the declaration, including its various drafts and related debates at UNESCO. The present author had an insight to the process as member of the Finnish delegation in an intergovernmental meeting in 1975 and as member of a three-person negotiation group appointed by UNESCO's Director-General to prepare a compromise draft in 1977.

[6] Parallel to questioning the traditional bourgeois notion of freedom, a new concept was introduced by a liberal French media expert, Jean D'Arcy: the Right to Communicate (Fischer and Harms 1983). It was an attempt to meet the intellectual and political challenge of the time, with a Western human rights bias. However, it only got a lukewarm reception in Western political circles, except in countries such as Sweden, which introduced the Right to Communicate into UNESCO's program in 1974. Instead, it met with mounting support in the developing world where it was welcomed as a new collective right defending cultural sovereignty. In fact, for some time it was as a serious candidate for the leading intellectual idea in global media debate, but it never succeeded in achieving the same momentum as NWICO.

[7] This and the following passage are based on the author's *The Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO*, Chapter 1 "The context: A movement towards a New International Information Order" (Nordenstreng 1984a: 3-77). An abridged version of it appeared as Nordenstreng 1995 and in Vincent et al. 1999: 235-268; recently also as Nordenstreng 2010. Detailed source references can be found in these publications.

[8] See http://www.wpfc.org/index.php?q=node/10 The WPFC initiators were American newspaper publishers with the support of their international affiliates the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA), the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers (FIEJ; later the World Association of Publishers, WAN), and respective commercial broadcasting associations (NABA, IAB). The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) dissociated itself from the Committee.

[9] *Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights, and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War*. Online http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13176&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

[10] For full account of the annual MacBride Round Tables, see Vincent et al. 1999.

[11] See http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html For accounts of NWICO-WSIS relationship, see Mansell and Nordenstreng 2006; Padovani and Nordenstreng 2005.