
Globalization, Regionalization, and Democratization: The Interaction of Three Paradigms in the Field of Mass Communication

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Through history democratization occurred in waves. An established model is to divide modern history into three major waves of the establishment of democratic systems: the first in the nineteenth century with the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Italy, and Argentina; the second after World War II with West Germany, Japan, India, and Israel; and the third beginning in 1974 with Portugal, Spain, and many other countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe (Potter et al. 1997, 9). Today there is no consensus as to whether the third wave remains in motion or whether we are in the midst of a reverse wave. It seems obvious, however, that the dynamics of democratic transformations have slowed significantly over the last decade, with only a few exceptions, like Indonesia in 1998. Political development in large parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East is stagnating. Intermediate liberalizations in certain countries (e.g., Zimbabwe, Algeria) have suffered authoritarian rollbacks, with no regional spillovers of democratization spreading from individual countries.

Contrary to common wisdom, new media like the Internet and direct satellite TV have not yet proved to be strong forces of global democratization. Third-wave democratizations between the 1970s and the early 1990s occurred long before the massive spread of new communication technologies. Indeed, democratization has almost come to a standstill since the mid-1990s, when satellite TV became accessible to the general population in developing countries and a growing number of members of upper and middle classes started using the Internet. What seems paradoxical at first glance is, in fact, not easy to explain. Most analysts would agree that it is absurd to hold new media responsible for the failures of political transformation. Equally, it is difficult to assume that Internet and satellite TV are "technologies of freedom." Since

there is no evidence that new communication has changed political systems, we will have to revise our theoretical assumptions and come up with more differentiated, less normative, and also more "modest" and realistic views on the processes of interaction between media and democratization.

To date, there has been little serious research done on the impact of new media on democracy in developing countries, with the exceptions of the work of Vicky Randall (1998), Peter Ferdinand (2000), and Adam Jones (2002). Most transformation theory in political science is policy oriented and largely neglects the media (Merkel 1994; Potter et al. 1997), although Eastern European transformations were amply analyzed (Aumente et al. 1999; Paletz, Jakubowicz, and Novosel 1995), as there was easy access to the newly found democracies. Yet, most literature is dedicated to the "consolidation" phase when democracy was technically introduced; again, scant attention was paid to the problems and strategies of the democratization of media working under authoritarian rule.

Since this chapter focuses on the interaction of democratization with globalization and regionalization, there are other useful types of communication research. Globalization literature, for example, is full of references to new media but seldom seriously reflects on political transformation in developing countries because of the focus on changes in Western political communication (Tsagarousianou et al. 1998; Margolis and Resnick 2000). Work done on new media in developing countries is produced by area specialists like orientalists, who observe many developments but usually lack the theoretical perspectives in communication, rendering their work mainly descriptive (Hafez and Reinknecht 2001).

Only a few specialists on international communication have produced research directed both toward democratization and globalization, including regionalization (Sinclair et al. 1996; Page and Crawley 2001; Hafez 2003). Overall, this issue seems to be in an academic no-man's land situated at the crossroads of different disciplines and, thus, outside of each's respective realm of responsibility.

GLOBALIZATION, REGIONALIZATION, AND DEMOCRATIZATION: SOME BASIC MEDIA FUNCTIONS IN POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

In order to assess the implications of globalization and regionalization on democratization, we will first have to establish theoretical premises about the relationship between the media, communication, and democratization. Such political transformation usually goes through the following phases:

1. Authoritarian phase: The political process is monopolized by an elite that rules not on the basis of democratic procedures and legitimacy but by co-

ercion or force. The degree of authoritarian power varies; a useful distinction here is between so-called soft- (Algeria) and hard-authoritarian (North Korea) systems, because they allow for different degrees of media freedom.

2. Transitory phase: Political transition is characterized by either reformist or revolutionary processes away from authoritarian regimes. While the transition ends with the establishment of a democratic system, primarily characterized by free elections, a number of other criteria also need to be met.
3. Consolidation phase: Analysts agree that the consolidation of democracy is the longest and most complicated period. Consolidation includes the establishment of institutions like a constitution, parliament, or democratic media, as well as a stable political culture and vibrant civil society. Consolidation is prone to relapse because the authoritarian bureaucracy and societal values cannot be replaced from one day to another.

"Big" and "small" media, from TV, to radio, press, Internet, video, clandestine radio, and leaflets, can fulfill different functions, depending on the phases of transition. In the authoritarian phase, the government's monopoly on public information must be gradually lifted in order to allow the opposition to inform and mobilize the population for political reform.¹ Patrick H. O'Neil rightly argues that television has the capacity to galvanize people and likely has the largest mobilization effect (1998, 8). Its mobilizing ability aside, broadcasting is vulnerable to state intervention because the large technical equipment needed requires structural centralization. Since mass communication is an industrial process, individual dissidents, artists, or writers are sometimes more effective in opposing authoritarian rule than big media is.

The media's success in catalyzing democracy depends on a number of intervening variables that seem to favor the effectiveness of small over big media (Jones 2002, 17–72): First, the degree of state repression varies between authoritarian systems, depending on their aforementioned soft or hard status. In hard-authoritarian systems, like the former Soviet Union, only small clandestine media (like the famous *Literaturnaja Gazeta*) can exist. In soft-authoritarian systems, like Morocco, gradual press liberalization, sometimes including TV and radio, is allowed. Second, the state of society and culture plays an important role. Since illiteracy reduces the spread of political ideas, we must concede that the easy control of TV by authoritarian governments thwarts mass mobilization. Third, the existence of private, nonstate capital that can be used for media activities is crucial. The least-developed countries (LDCs) have a much lower capacity to substitute state capitalist control of the media sector than richer authoritarian societies. Privatization, on the other hand, is no guarantee of liberalization since richer elites in the developing world are closely intertwined with ruling autocratic elites. Fourth, the influence of the media on political transformation

increases with the number and quality of ties existing between the media and oppositional groups and other civil society elites. The media might be more effective in articulating alternative views and mobilizing people for transition if their positions are in line with the political programs of existing groups or networks. Fifth, the state of journalism is important since its professional development is usually limited in predemocratic countries. Professional ethics and education are not only blurred by political imperatives but also by mechanisms of self-censorship.

Most factors influencing the media in the authoritarian phase also play an important role in the phase of transition. However, for media, conflicts within elite ranks—as during the tenures of Mikhail Gorbachev or Iranian president Mohammad Khatami—are important because soft-liners usually provide a certain degree of protection for a semiliberalized media system. Taboos are downgraded, and the relationship between big and small media changes. In periods of transition, the role of big media increases due to elite protection.

The phase of consolidation is surely the time of the big media. Free of authoritarian intimidation and restrictions, the media usually develop rapidly, as has been seen in countries like Indonesia, while the country is at the same time a case for the structural instability and the dangers inherent in consolidation. Latin America is in many ways proof that exploding commercialization after years and decades of state control can lead to immediate media concentration that again limits the capability of the media to function as a fourth estate (Waisbord 2000).

EXTERNAL FACTORS OF MEDIA DEMOCRACY

Figure 7.1 shows a simple model incorporating the various phases of transformation, the intervening variables of society, and the dimensions of the media activity:

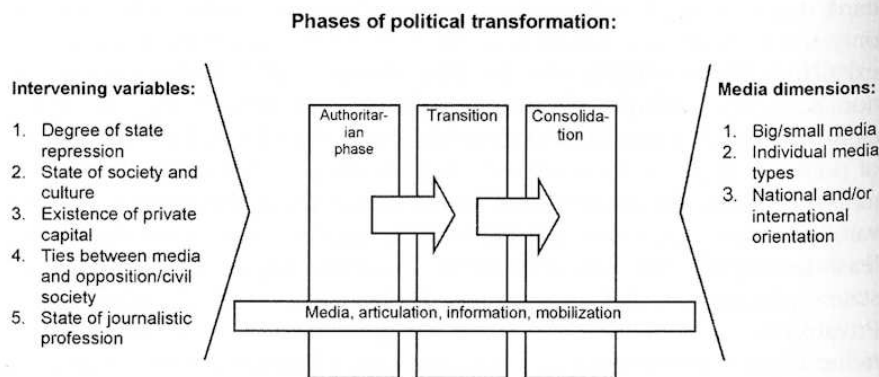


Figure 7.1. Media and political transformation.

This chapter primarily analyzes the third media dimension: national and/or international orientation. The question is whether the global or regional orientation of the media and consumer has an impact on the relationship between the media and political transformation. Further, is the international sphere really an activating media dimension facilitating political opposition, civil society, and the media to counterbalance state intervention or societal obstacles (intervening variables), and does it improve their capacity to articulate alternative political views and mobilize the people for democratization?

Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink rightly argue that when individuals or groups are refused certain rights by authoritarian governments, they seek international connections and organize networks, causing boomerang effects by creating external pressure on national processes of transformation (1998, 12ff.). Since the right to express one's opinion can be restricted, individuals, political groups, or even journalists and the media may seek external support by channeling domestic news into world public opinion, activating network support for journalists in danger, directing world attention to domestic problems, or soliciting assistance in the form of pressure from foreign governments or the United Nations.

Potential interaction processes between the national and international sphere are, for example,

1. Groups or individuals (e.g., dissidents, intellectuals) use the Internet to form advocacy networks, thereby reversing the news flow and political pressure of their own government.
2. Political activities by groups or individuals are covered by the international media, which may effect world public opinion.
3. Big media introduce a topic on the news agenda, which is picked up by foreign media and international news agencies, sometimes mediated by information networks on the Internet.
4. Dissidents (e.g., journalists) might be supported by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which can activate political pressure both on their home governments and the dissidents' government.

These are only some of myriad interaction processes that can take place between the national and the international realms. The following will concentrate on the first and second examples, followed by an elaboration on how mainstream global or regional media (big press, TV, and radio) can be conducive to democratization in authoritarian countries and under which circumstances small media like the Internet do or do not pose a vital alternative.

POLITICAL OPPOSITION AS COVERED BY GLOBAL MEDIA: THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE OF DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

It has become common for many globalization scholars and analysts to assert that the globalization of mass communication has taken a central role in political transformation. O'Neil is but one of many authors who assume that transborder flows of news influence world politics: "Already we have seen multiple examples in which the internationalization of mass communications has influenced the course of political change" (1998, 12). O'Neil offers two examples: the political changes in Eastern Europe and the Chiapas revolt in Mexico. The latter uprising and political movement highlights the role of the Internet and civic networking, which will be discussed later. Eastern European transformations have often been considered TV revolutions, but that argument suffers from inconsistencies in need of clarification. It is certainly true that the 1989 political events in Eastern Europe were constantly televised globally and that this kind of concentrated agenda setting could have spurred the political dynamics of that time.

However, those events were broadcast on national media systems because, in 1989, few European households, let alone Eastern European ones, had access to satellite TV. And the same holds true for access to the foreign press. With the exception of the German Democratic Republic, audiences in Eastern Europe had very limited opportunities to watch on TV their own or their neighbors' revolutions. The role of oral and nonmediated communication in such situations should not be underestimated: people met in marketplaces and joined in as demonstrations started and things snowballed. Furthermore, Eastern Europe received a tremendous push from Gorbachev's reforms from the mid-1980s (DeLuca 1998). The media operated amid political transition, which had already reached countries like Hungary, among the first to revolt in 1989. Furthermore, international TV only covered the political events after the movements and revolts had already broken out. It is impossible to draw conclusions from this situation for political transformations in a strictly authoritarian, low-context situation.

The effects of global TV on democratization seem rather limited, since the so-called third wave of democratization has waned as the presence of satellite and global TV expanded. One of the major reasons is that many democratization processes are only marginally represented on global TV. Case studies of the coverage of the Middle East on a prestigious German national news program show that it is often not the democratic opposition, but rather violent and extremist Islamist or nationalist political groups, that get the most attention (Hafez 2002b, 134ff.). Comparing German press coverage of Turkey and Egypt, the Kurdish extremist party PKK gained tremendous coverage in the 1990s; however, it stalled in the Turkish parliament, coming up against

the governing parties and opposition in a well-established (though, at times, insufficiently consolidated²) democratic system. In contrast, Egyptian secular and leftist parties and forces (e.g., the Wafd Party, the liberal-socialist Tammam, and the Misr Party) were almost completely marginalized in the German press in favor of coverage of Islamist extremists. Further analysis of German or other Western TV coverage would surely offer even clearer results. While extremist radicals like the Egyptian Jihad al-Islami are constantly in the news, most Egyptian parties and even large NGOs have never, ever appeared on Western TV.

There certainly exists a functional symbiosis between the extremists' desire for publicity and media interest in conflict and violence, a theme often analyzed (Wilkinson 1997; Nacos 1994). However, regarding political transformation, it seems more important to understand that moderate opposition receives limited coverage in the international media when there is a soft-authoritarian state not yet in a period of transition but developed enough to show vestiges of opposition.

Thus, with opposition rarely represented in international media, there is diminished international attention and minimal democratizing pressure from outside forces (governments, world public opinion, etc.). While it seems paradoxical, under certain conditions, media systems from countries that pretend to support democracy in fact pay less attention to democratic opposition than the ruling authoritarian governments against which the opposition struggles. In these cases international media and authoritarian governments prevent the articulation of alternative political views that could ultimately mobilize for democracy. If the relationship between international media and extremists is a functional symbiosis, then the relation with moderate opposition forces under pretransitory, authoritarian conditions is a spiral of silence regarding democratic articulation. When individuals or groups become dissidents and fulfill the criteria of sensational news, this situation can change briefly. But on a daily basis, democratic movements are of little interest to global media.

Interestingly, when theorizing media representation of political "challengers," Gadi Wolfsfeld speaks not of democratic movements or democratic parties but of protest movements. Those movements, he argues, need the media for mobilization, validation, and enlargement (Wolfsfeld 1997, 77). But protest is hardly possible under authoritarian rule, limiting Wolfsfeld's theory to democratic or liberal political systems. It is almost impossible for moderate opposition to initiate open protests like demonstrations to garner the attention of the global media. If they do—consider Burmese human rights activist and Nobel Prize-winner Aung San Su Chi—there may be a steep personal price to pay for becoming international media stars.

If this spiral of silence regarding moderate opposition and the global media's structural inability to positively effect democratization sounds very pessimistic, at least three important qualifications must be made:

1. The alleged underrepresentation in the global media is not sufficiently verified through country studies and comparative research.
2. While the global media representation of democratic oppositional forces might be deficient, the global media can have a positive democratizing influence through the "demonstration effect" of representing other democracies.
3. Oppositional TV and radio programs and foreign broadcasting services producing specific programs in local vernaculars can have a positive effect on political transformation.

Some foreign broadcasters show a clear orientation toward compensating for deficits of the national authoritarian media systems by giving oppositional forces a voice (Groebel 2000). But subsuming foreign broadcasters like Voice of America under the phenomenon of global media, as O'Neil (1998, 11), for example, has done, is questionable. Foreign broadcasting is based on the very old concept of mostly the big Western, but also other, states seeking news hegemony over certain world areas.³

REGIONAL COMMUNICATION: THE DECISIVE LINK BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION

For the last decade, social scientists have debated what they perceive to be an emerging "new regionalism," a popular term for increasing regional economic and social interactions that are informal, nonhegemonic, comprehensive, and multidimensional (Breslin et al. 2002; Schirm 2002). While "old" regionalism was clearly dominated by government-to-government relations, new regionalism is based on networks of society-to-society interactions, including such diverse phenomena as regional political networking by NGOs or regional transborder media dissemination and consumption.

John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka, and Stuart Cunningham maintain that today the growth of regional media markets is even more significant than the spread of anglophone globalization (Sinclair et al. 1996, 12f.). Their vision is one of geolinguistic subregions like South Asia or Latin America incorporating Western influences and generating new national or regional products, including TV news and films, thus dominating Western "cultural imperialist" globalization.

In fact, the number of mostly private TV and radio broadcasters in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East has multiplied. New cultures of

news production have been established through a mix of Western-style news formats, domestically oriented news agendas, and various degrees of liberalization under both soft-authoritarian and already democratic conditions. "Globalization gone regional" is an indirect, albeit key, effect of global media on political transformation. However, regionalization is also a double-edged sword, since much of the news and political information is not completely free. Is regionalization, therefore, a catalyst for or a barrier to democratization?

A good example of regional adaptation of transnational TV formats is the famous Arab network Al-Jazeera in Qatar. In the few years of its existence, it has become the most important Arab TV news network. Al-Jazeera has achieved what global networks have failed to do: stimulate a democratic discourse in the Arab world through daily coverage of regional problems like the Gulf wars or the Arab-Israeli conflict and by broadcasting open and outspoken debates among various political sectors on national and regional affairs. While Al-Jazeera's coverage can be criticized for certain biases, like all other networks, including CNN and the BBC (Ayish 2002, 143f.), overall it is pluralist in nature, and its programming plainly advocates democracy.

Success stories like those of Al-Jazeera are based on the fact that they operate transnationally but remain in a more or less homogenous cultural and linguistic environment. Satellite transmission allows such media to bypass national authoritarian information control and all other intervening variables identified in the "Globalization, Regionalization, and Democratization" section above as important for the development of democratic media in an authoritarian context. Furthermore, the commonality of language facilitates widespread acceptance of regional programming in countries throughout the region. While Western media can be received by many consumers, they are understood only by small English-, French-, or other-language-speaking elites. Regional formats, however, have a potential to reach larger audiences and to be more popular; therefore, they have greater potential for political mobilization (Sakr 2001; Hafez 2001; Sreberny 2001; Hafez 2002a).

There are parallel but contradictory developments in global communication nowadays. One is the spread of English as a common language; a tendency strong on both the Internet and TV (e.g., English programs on Nile TV). The other is the revitalization of indigenous languages, as in India, for example, where dozens of programs in Hindi and other languages have come into existence. Many regions in the world show similar regional, transborder effects, including the Arab world, Latin America, and South Asia, among others. While Europe may be more integrated economically and politically, a "European media" hardly exists because languages are too diverse.

Comparing those regions, it becomes clear that in both Latin America and India, democracies were established before there was democratic TV and (at least big) radio. In the Arab world, however, the case of Al-Jazeera points to

the opposite trend. Qatar is an economically vibrant small state whose ruler wants to transform his emirate into a trading hub of the Middle East. Emir Al-Thani, who founded the network in 1996, is not a political reformer, because Al-Jazeera is not allowed to cover domestic issues of Qatar critically, although it can do so regarding other Arab governments. Rather than being the product of domestic political reform, Al-Jazeera is an instrument of the emir for shaping his country's image as a modern state.

South Asia is another example of the regionalization of satellite TV. Indian TV—for example, the various programs offered by Zee TV—is influential in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Burma. Pakistani advertisers even place advertisements on Zee TV to reach domestic customers (Page and Crawley 2001). Other Indian channels, like Asianet, are directed toward the Malayalam-speaking viewers of South India and to the Indian diaspora in the Persian Gulf region (Wildermuth 2000, 225). One might argue that the bulk of Indian TV productions are commercial and entertaining, rather than political, like Al-Jazeera's, which challenges Arab authoritarian rule. However, Manas Ray and Elizabeth Jacka have observed that the Bangladeshi government, representing a very small stratum of the super rich in that country, fears that the middle-class lifestyle and consumerism represented in Indian films could cause social unrest in a country that, for the most part, is extremely poor (Ray and Jacka 1996, 96). Also, Indian broadcasting challenges the Islamic law that the Bangladeshi upper class uses to play down class differences and which in the past dominated state TV and radio.

Latin America and the Caribbean are further examples of regionalization. The English-speaking Caribbean has for decades been a testing ground for regional, transborder broadcasting flows. Even before satellites, authoritarian states like Cuba were never able to prevent the influx of broadcasting from neighboring countries. Consumers always had access to media other than that which was officially sanctioned (Brown 1996, 43ff.). In contrast to much commercial media in South Asia, Caribbean regional broadcasting always comprised news outlets, helping consumers to interpret domestic and regional political events.

In Latin America, regionalization has taken on various forms that are more or less conducive to political transformations. The most renowned trend is the commercialization of Latin American TV by a handful of media enterprises like Globo and Televisa, which in many countries are closely associated with the ruling elites. The result is a lack of political information and independent critical views. Advocates, therefore, look to small and alternative media networked in regional cooperation to cope with the commercial sector and help to build democratic media for the consolidation of democracy (Suárez 1996, 51).

In parts of the world where political development is stagnating, economic motives are key factors pushing for the opening of media systems. Despite

players like Rupert Murdoch, global media capital has been scantily invested in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The business activities of most media tycoons are regional rather than global. Italian prime minister and media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, members of the ruling family in Saudi Arabia (Boyd 2001), the German Bertelsmann empire, and many others who dominate media markets around the world are more regional than global players. The sole exceptions are Euro-American media mergers and financial transactions. But even seemingly global players like Murdoch generate only about 10 percent of their business outside the Euro-American-Australian formation (Balnaves et al. 2001, 60). Transnationalization of Asian media capital, for example, remains low because international firms face many political and cultural risks. Western business is not keen to invest in parts of the world with limited markets. Therefore, media capital, one of the intervening variables for the development of democratic media, is mostly national or regional in nature.

When the globalization debate started in the 1990s, analysts tended to neglect or underestimate the regional dimension of future developments. The concepts of the "end of the nation-state" and the "globalization of communication" left no room for a third, intermediate layer. What is needed, therefore, is a new theoretical approach to the national-regional-global nexus in the field of media and political transformation.

Does regional broadcasting really serve as a catalyst for those potential cultural impulses that global TV has failed to send out? Does it fully compensate for the spiral of silence, in which the secularist, nonviolent opposition at times seems to be banned?

Samuel Huntington's idea of a "clash of civilization" addressed the issue of regionality, but Huntington was wrong in assuming that cultures as such are antagonistic forces. However, it would be correct to argue that hegemonic forces within any nation or region—autocratic regimes, traditional patriarchal or religious leaders, and so forth—can be hostile toward globalization; thus, regional communication is often established as a countervailing force against global influences and intended to filter out, for example, prodemocracy news from outside a country. In the 1990s, Saudi Arabia established an empire of Arabic TV networks that were modern in their style of presentation but remained restricted in many sensitive political-news areas. Critical statements about the Saudi Arabian government or even the king or any "friendly government" on a Saudi TV network are impossible.

Such regionalization is deterring people's attention from much more diversified programs, such as Al-Jazeera. Marwan M. Kraidy is right when he argues that most regional TV in the Arab world allows no access to NGOs or the political opposition, which remain isolated from mainstream TV discourse (Kraidy 2002, 15). Here we have established the representation of the opposition as one of the main theoretical criteria for a positive link between

media and democratization. The bulk of the new Arab TV channels and programs, however, are owned and dominated by private capital that is intertwined with the ruling elites and, therefore, politically controlled and hardly conducive to democracy.

While there is real potential for regional communication to support democratization, in reality many regional broadcasters prefer a modernized version of status quo communication.

THE ZAPATISTA EFFECT? MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT CIVIC NETWORKING AND THE MOBILIZING EFFECT OF THE INTERNET

The small medium of the Internet obviously plays a completely different role at the intersection of globalization, regionalization, and political transformation. Most intervening variables show a positive balance:

1. Liberalization granted by the state: It is not easy for governments to control the Internet.
2. The existence of private capital: The Internet is a low-budget medium.
3. Ties between oppositional groups and the media: The Internet offers every group a chance to present itself since there is no "mediator," like the journalist, acting as gatekeeper.
4. The state of the journalistic profession: This is irrelevant for the same reason as for number 3.

Moreover, the media dimensions (see figure 7.1) have tremendous potential since the Internet is an integrated medium that comprises big and small media (e.g., the press is also on the Net) and allows both national and international political strategies.

Rather than idealizing the Internet, one has to come to terms with a number of problems. There is one intervening variable in our theoretical model that can easily limit the effect of the Internet: the state of society and culture (variable 2). Problems related to this matter have been amply discussed under the rubric of the "digital gap" or "digital divide." In reality, that gap is multiple. There are many differences in Internet access between developing and developed countries, between the rich and the poor in each country, between metropolitan and rural areas, and between younger and older generations. In communication related to political transformation, these gaps can accumulate, leaving merely a thin layer of young, urban, well-educated, and politically conscious people and groups, who compose political communication on the Internet. Traditional (e.g., religious) institutions and many mainstream organizations (like trade unions) have only minor standing on the Net, overshadowed by small groups of young political activists. Mean-

while, there are much larger constituents of traditional and more established political-social formations.

We must also acknowledge that the Internet is a so-called pull medium in that it necessitates an active search for political information. TV, radio, and the press, on the other hand, are push media because they offer a selection of news for consumption. Therefore, Internet-based political information is mainly used by information elites. Nevertheless, the debate about the digital gap between the North and South is often misleading since many of the discrepancies are more quantitative than qualitative. Most of the intervening variables that we have theoretically defined allow, or even necessitate, elite behavior by private capital, the opposition, and journalists. While private capital might be satisfied with the mainstream development of regional TV, political parties and other oppositional forces are rarely articulated in the mainstream media of many countries.

But the Internet demonopolizes access to political information, creating new discourses about democratization. If we assume that national big media are restricted in authoritarian states and that international repercussions are limited by language barriers, and if we also assume that opposition forces have a limited presence in the global media, then we must conclude that the Internet offers huge potential for political representation. Its messages can be formulated in English or other languages and, thus, receive global attention. Since the Internet gives political groups and individuals a voice, the degree of differentiation in political articulation is significant and incomparable to anything big media could offer. Also, it is interactive by nature and, therefore, a place where dense political discourses can take form and transcend borders in a way unimaginable for classic, small-media-like leaflets.

In principle, the specific constellation of intervening variables allows the Internet to exert vital functions for political transformation, mainly political articulation and information. At the same time, uneven Internet access—the so-called digital gap—severely limits its capacity to exert the other vital functions of the media in political transformation: the mobilization of people for political movements. Both the unequal representation of political organizations and the limitations of Internet access severely reduce the Internet's mobilization effect. The Internet is unable to directly attract the attention of the masses for political purposes and is instead confined, for example, to inter-elite mobilization of NGOs and their sympathizers. But is elite mobilization really a new phenomenon? Political opposition forces like the African National Congress in South Africa and many other movements have had a mass mobilizing effect on people long before the Internet came into existence.

It might therefore be correct, as Lawrence K. Grossman claims, that in Africa, for instance, the Internet enables "tens of millions of widely dispersed citizens to receive the information they need to carry out the business of government

themselves" (Grossman 1996, 6). However, Dana Ott and Melissa Rosser are equally correct when conceding that

The statistical data, although preliminary, suggests that there is a measurable link between political and economic freedom and access to the Internet in Africa. It must be remembered, however, that association is not the same as causation. . . . Some would argue, in fact, that the causal arrow might point in the other direction, namely that political and economic freedom are, in fact, promoting the Internet, rather than the converse. . . . Considering the relative newness of the Internet to Africa, our ability to determine its impact on other development sectors is still in its infancy. (2000, 152)

Even though an analysis of Internet content points to the existence of new political discourses and a new brand of political information, the current literature is unable to prove the existence of significant effects of the Internet on political and democratic mobilization. Case studies, like the one on Indonesia, that indeed suggest a close connection between the Internet and mobilization have not taken place in a purely authoritarian context but rather describe a society already in the midst of rapid political transition. In situations where political change is already at hand and societal freedoms are growing, the Internet serves as a pin board for the coordination of activists and the advancement of the political program of an already strong political movement.

To summarize, the Internet often helps the articulate political elites, but it seems questionable that it can mobilize the masses. Analyzing the Palestinian Internet, for example, Peter Schäfer concludes that the Internet has not improved the coordination of political activities among Palestinian NGOs or other forces trying to mobilize people for political action. Coordination is still exerted through traditional channels (e.g., face to face), while the Internet is perceived as a forum for lively, but often contradictory, discourse (Schäfer 2004, 62, 89). The same holds true for authoritarian countries like Saudi Arabia, where cassette tapes remain the most effective communication tool of the opposition because they reflect Saudi oral culture and the limited literacy among the Saudi population (Fandy 1999, 144).

The last point to be analyzed is the international dimension, the third of the media dimensions of the media-democracy-relations in our theoretical model (see figure 7.1). How effective is the Internet in helping to create international alliances? Through the Internet, political activists can funnel relevant information in regional or global networks of like-minded or interested people. Keck and Sikkink (1998) speak of a boomerang effect of political communication. If communication between the ruler and the ruled in a certain country is blocked, political messages from civil society and the opposition can be sent out of the country and return through outside political pressure on the ruling government; this pressure can be ex-

erted by other governments, through international NGOs, and over myriad other channels.

The international link of political communication on the Internet is often labeled the "Zapatista effect" (Cleaver 1998; Randfeldt 1998). The Zapatista rebellion in Mexico received worldwide attention through its presence on the Internet. A closer look at that effect, however, shows that international mobilization of political activism occurred under very specific conditions. The Zapatista effect was created through an alliance between an indigenous national-liberation movement and the global movement against neoliberalism. The Chiapas revolt was made into a symbol for the struggle against an unjust world order. Other provinces in Mexico with similar problems did not get the same attention, and it was not the Zapatistas themselves who created the massive Internet presence; rather, such initiatives came from outside and were only later coordinated with the Zapatista leadership. Thus, it would be naive to believe that messages sent out by indigenous political movements would automatically resonate with international advocacy networks and create boomerang effects of external pressure for democratic developments. Rather, such international alliances are characterized by many specific conditions.

The case of the Palestinian autonomous area is another example. Schäfer has observed that the Internet has improved the communication of NGOs and other political forces with the rest of the world. The most valuable contribution, according to Schäfer, are daily information newsletters by a number of human rights NGOs on casualties from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Schäfer 2004, 54). There has also been improved interaction within the Palestinian diaspora and between the Palestinian territories and the diaspora (Schäfer 2004, 89).

But it is hard to see how the Internet could have had a positive effect on the internal political mobilization for democracy within the territories. Many oppositional individuals and groups that were banned from the censored Palestinian mainstream media express themselves on the Internet. But the second intifada uprising that started in 2000 and resulted in anti-Israeli and antigovernment demonstrations is only the result of any Internet presence to a very limited degree since mobilization occurs through oral communication or traditional political communication (e.g., pamphlets). Boomerang effects informing global audiences about the problems of Palestinian democracy do take place, but there is no evidence that this information has had an effect on international or domestic policy makers, including international or national NGOs, or that such messages have changed the course of events in the Arab-Israeli conflict, simply because that conflict has for decades been prominent in the international media and the effects of a single medium can hardly ever be isolated by scientific means. Unlike the Zapatista case, Palestine has not been made the symbol of an Internet-based antiglobalization movement; therefore, the effects of the Internet are very hard to discern.

Although single-medium effects on politics can hardly ever be elaborated by scientific means, there are many other examples of countries where it is at least very likely that the Internet has had positive effects on democratic developments. When Tunisian journalist Tawfiq Ben Brik started a hunger strike to protest for freedom of opinion, the Internet witnessed a wave of protests, long before the global mainstream media placed the issue on the agenda. Also, Taliban Afghanistan was the target of feminist campaigns. It is noticeable, however, that a directly mobilizing effect of the Internet, in the sense of measurable policy changes, protests, or the like, seems limited to specific campaigns that have created very short-lived alliances of the global civil society. Nevertheless, the Internet in those cases has seemed a vital alternative to the other media.

CONCLUSION

It is undisputable that the new technological developments of satellite TV and the Internet have tremendously increased the flow of transborder communication. However, there is no automatic link between such interconnectedness and a positive effect on the political transformation and democratization of authoritarian countries.

Global media, both transnational TV networks like CNN and national programs received from outside the country, have a demonstration effect on authoritarian states. They open windows of information about other political systems, providing role models for better political practice in other countries. Direct positive influences on the transformation of authoritarian systems are limited because moderate opposition forces of the respective countries are seldom represented in the global media system, except in extraordinary events. The idea that global TV and radio could bypass authoritarian media control and bring critical voices into these countries must be qualified by the fact that the presence of global media from outside a certain country or region do not guarantee permanent, long-lived, or in-depth coverage of the national politics of authoritarian countries.

Regional TV, radio, and the press have a greater impact than global TV on political transformation because the content is politically and culturally more adapted to transformatory needs. Media capital flows are more regional than global in outreach, and regional TV and radio production and consumption in geolinguistic entities like South Asia, the Arab world, or South America are growing faster than global programming. Very often, however, regional media are dominated by political and business elites who allow media modernization only as long as the political status quo is not in danger. Because, even in regions with a higher number of authoritarian systems (Africa, Middle East, Asia), political systems differ in their approaches to political issues,

regional transborder transmission of TV and radio very often does have an opening effect on public political communication.

However, small media like the Internet are, in principal, more functional than big media in influencing political transformation in the authoritarian phase. The medium has great potential to serve as a platform of articulation for oppositional views. The same is true for national-global interaction. Boomerang effects do occur in the sense that Internet messages are transmitted from national to international advocacy networks and the world media. Direct political mobilization of NGOs, foreign governments, and other political forces, however, is most likely to be successful if campaigns can be based on alliances of national oppositional forces and established global political movements (like the antiglobalization movement), which are not always existent.

NOTES

1. Revolutionary developments are not conceptualized in this chapter.
2. For example, the Turkish military has at many points in recent history intervened in democratic decision making.
3. I recently finalized an evaluation project on the Arab, Turkish, Farsi, Dari, and Pashto radio programs of the Deutsche Welle, the German foreign broadcasting service.

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Foreword	vii
<i>Majid Tebranian</i>	
Acknowledgments	xiii
1 Media Globalization, Media Democratization: Challenges, Issues, and Paradoxes	1
<i>Yuezhi Zhao and Robert A. Hackett</i>	
Part I: Media Globalization and Democratic Deficits: National and Regional Audits	
2 Civil Society as Contested Concept: Media and Political Transformation in Eastern and Central Europe	37
<i>Colin Sparks</i>	
3 Who Wants Democracy and Does It Deliver Food? Communication and Power in a Globally Integrated China	57
<i>Yuezhi Zhao</i>	
4 Contested Futures: Indian Media at the Crossroads	81
<i>Pradip Thomas</i>	
5 Changing Political Cultures and Media under Globalism in Latin America	101
<i>Javier Protzel</i>	

6	Media in "Globalizing" Africa: What Prospect for Democratic Communication? <i>Arthur-Martins Aginam</i>	121
Part II: Media and Democracy in Global Sites and Conflicts		
7	Globalization, Regionalization, and Democratization: The Interaction of Three Paradigms in the Field of Mass Communication <i>Kai Hafez</i>	145
8	Constructing Collective Identities and Democratic Media in a Globalizing World: Israel as a Test Case <i>Dov Shinar</i>	165
9	The Iraq Conflict and the Media: Embedded with War Rather than with Peace and Democracy <i>Jan Oberg</i>	185
10	Global Media Governance as a Potential Site of Civil Society Intervention <i>Seán Ó Siochbrú</i>	205
Part III: Modalities of Democratization		
11	Beyond Wiggle Room: American Corporate Media's Democratic Deficit, Its Global Implications, and Prospects for Reform <i>Robert W. McChesney and Robert A. Hackett</i>	225
12	Globalization, Communication, Democratization: Toward Gender Equality <i>Annabelle Sreberny</i>	245
13	Peace Journalism: A Global Dialog for Democracy and Democratic Media <i>Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick</i>	269
14	Finding a Frame: Toward a Transnational Advocacy Campaign to Democratize Communication <i>Seán Ó Siochbrú</i>	289
	Index	313
	About the Contributors	325

Foreword

Majid Tebranian

This volume has emerged out of the Toda Institute's Globalization, Regionalization and Democratization (GRAD) project, a three-year research program on democratization in the context of regional and global conflicts. The project's ten research teams and nearly one hundred participants met at Oxford, Vancouver, and Budapest (2002–2004) to conceptualize the problems, undertake field research, and prepare chapters for this and other volumes. Consisting of distinguished journalists and communication scholars, the research team represented in this volume focused on media democratization at the national, regional, and global levels.

Three dominant trends are singled out in this volume: globalization, democratization, and media pluralization. The volume ably takes up the interactions among these trends. Globalization is perhaps the most visible of the three. However, it also is the most easily misunderstood trend. We need to unpack the concept to better understand it. Four different types of globalization seem to be simultaneously at work. From top-down, globalization has come to mean a neoliberal hegemonic project to extend the costs and benefits of capitalism worldwide. This particular perspective is best represented by the World Economic Forum, annually meeting since 1970 at Davos, Switzerland. Its views may be therefore called "globalization according to Davos." It represents the interests and perspectives of some thousand global corporations and their political allies.

In December 1999, a second view of globalization emerged out of Seattle when a coalition of labor unions, human rights advocates, and environmentalist activists demonstrated against the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Seattle protests were subsequently replicated at a number of other world cities at which intergovernmental organizations such as the