

**Mass Communication and Cultural
Identity:
The Unresolved Issue of National
Sovereignty and Cultural Autonomy in the
Wake of
New Communication Technologies**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis of this article is that the national interests of African states make it imperative for them to carefully evaluate, assess and examine the development of their present media structures and ownership patterns. The article identifies some of the new communication media in the African context and offers a detailed review of the national and international ramifications of their selection and adoption as privately-owned enterprises.

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**Le Communication de Masse et l'Identité Culturelle: L'Eternal
Problème de Souveraineté et Nationale et de l'Autonomie
Culturelle face aux Nouvelles Technologies de
Communication**

RESUME

La thèse de cet article est que les intérêts nationaux des états africains les obligent à évaluer et examiner soigneusement le développement des structures et les modèles de propriété actuels de leurs médias - L'article identifie dans le contexte africain certains nouveaux médias de communication et fait une analyse détaillée des ramifications nationales et internationales de leur sélection et adoption en tant qu'entreprises privées.

Introduction

Culture, since the inception of modern mass communication systems, has consistently dominated the literature of mass communication studies. It has become a dominant theme because of its embodiment as the totality of a people's ways of life and conducting the affairs of their social systems. Its implications on national sovereignty therefore become quite obvious to any particular nation; especially those nations on the periphery of the mass media hard - and soft-wares.

The era of post-industrial (information) society is accentuating the cultural dominance of the most industrialized societies on the developing societies of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

However, this situation is traceable to culmination of historical factors, such as the industrial revolution, colonialism, neo-colonialism, the era of the development of industrial-military complexes, and post-industrialism. The model of cultural triangulation (Uche, 1987), cultural synchronization (Hamelink, 1984), theoretical framework on cultural context for the international study of youth and music formation and interaction (Robinson, 1986), all give various rationales that explain the basic issues of cultural identity and mass communication.

Some of the dominant and impressive literatures, among the existing array of work of cultural studies in mass communication, include: Gerbner (1973, 1986), Melody (1981), Nordenstreng (1974, 1979), Ugboajah (1972, 1985), O'Brien (1975), Schiller (1967, 1979, 1986), Uche (1986a, 1986b, 1987),

Hoffmann-Riem (1987), Jakubowicz (1986), Servaes (1986), Gurstein (1986), Jussawalla (1986), Ekwelle (1985), Hall (1979, 1985), Katz (1973, 1979), Golding (1979). The existing array of literature in mass communication and cultural identity is just too overwhelming. The author has not deliberately left out the names and works of some of the most outstanding scholarly research work of renowned academics in the field.

The advent of new communication technologies has added a new dimension to the problem of cultural autonomy and national sovereignty in global communication. The author has made an observation in the Richard Cole and Robert Stevenson project on *Communication Research in the Twenty-First Century* (forthcoming) that the debate we were all confronted with on the new world information and communication order will eventually be regarded as child's play during the twenty-first century and beyond when the accomplishments of post-industrial information society might have been consolidated. The capability of the new communication technologies to perpetuate, sustain and impose the dominant culture of the media core countries on the peripheral (dependent) countries is no longer a subject of contention. The trend in one-way flow of information and communication from the industrialized world to mostly Third World countries is related to political and economic structures of the developing countries.

The crumbling of the economies of the Third World nations, resulting in heavy indebtedness to the industrialized nations, is tied to their inevitable dependence on heavy agro-industrial and consumer goods, being imported from the advanced countries of which new information technologies form a major aspect in the communications industry as a service economy. Such new communication technologies as the coaxial optical fibre and satellite dish in telecommunications have made dependence a *fait accompli*.

The rate at which new communication technologies spring up and the ramifications of these new technologies in the formulation and execution of domestic policies and conduct of foreign policy and international diplomacy, prompted Nigeria to hold a major national seminar (February 2-7, 1987) for the development of a national communication policy. The Federal (Nigerian) Ministry of Information and Culture, the sole organizer and architect of the seminar for the formulation of a new national communication policy,

presented a paper under the title: "Considerations for the Formulation and Implementation of Public Policy on Mass Media Hardwares: The Challenges of New Communication Technologies".

The Federal Nigerian government paper basically addressed the twin problems of cultural autonomy and media privatization in the country, and the implications of the new communications hardwares developed and being marketed by the advanced industrialized countries of the North. Because of the relevance of the Federal Nigerian government presentation the author has decided to base this article mostly on the contents of the Federal Nigerian government paper for a further reflection on the issue of the interplay of mass communication, cultural autonomy, and national sovereignty in the wake of post-industrial information society.

The Nature and Social Functions of the New Communication Technologies

The dawn of the post-industrial information society, characterized by Information Technologies (IT), is undoubtedly going to have a great impact on the cultures and mass communication contents of both the industrialized and developing world. Because the advanced technologies are originating from the industrialized societies, they will exist to set the cultural agenda on the dependent nations whose cultural identity and national sovereignty may have to toe the cultural line of the media core countries. Mankind has demonstrated his capacity to invent and conquer natural barriers in a bid to achieve efficiency and reliability in information processing. The age of communication and information revolution is here. We now live in a global information society. However, African and other Third World nations are yet to undergo the political, economic, social and technological transformations needed to become a member of the much-talked-about information society.

Let us take a brief inventory of some of the new forms of the new media, as detailed by Myung (1985: 173-177). The Cable TV, unlike the conventional TV systems, comes with the capability to transmit TV programmes through a cable installed between the station and a subscriber's home. It also

has the in-built technology that offers information such as home-banking, home-shopping, and telemetering. The Videotex and Teletext systems make it possible for information, stored in the form of characters and diagrams in databases to be decoded on your television screens when needed, by pushing the appropriate button. Videotex provides information on stock trading, the weather, shopping, travel, etc; etc. On the other hand, Teletext allows one whose TV set has the appropriate gadget to call up information whenever he needs it. However, the information is transmitted along with TV programmes. The Direct Satellite Broadcasting System allows a television household to receive TV programmes directly from a satellite. The Still Picture Broadcasting provides lecture programmes on any subject. The Video Response System relies on wide-band lines of either co-axial cables or fibre optics to provide the same function as Videotex, in addition to voice-overs and moving pictures.

It is the amalgamation, or rather integration of telecommunication, postal communications, broadcasting and the print media computer that we refer to as the "new media". Formerly, each of the four was independent of one another. But modern technological advances have made it possible to merge them. This has resulted in the advent of another media - electronic mail and electronic newspapers. The consequence of the new media is that there is no longer any defined demarcation between mass communication and telecommunication, as used to be the case in the past. Telecommunication system has constructed Integrated Services Digital Networks. The implication of this is that while in the past, such individual networks as telegraph, telephone, telex existed and functioned independent of each other, the advent of ISDN now makes it possible for all these once independent communication media systems to be merged into one single network.

When the technologically dependent nations make their selection on the adoption of the new media, their choice is usually influenced by the following technical characteristics the new communication technologies possess: promptness, effective bit rate, cheapness, reliability, accessibility, **storage/retrieval capacity and confidentiality**. They are also influenced by the following technical functions the new media also possess: specific instruction, marketing

information, news and weather services, entertainment, opinion formation, and personal correspondence.

In the developing nations of Africa, the new media technologies are being adopted because of the expected services they promise: that of raising the overall quality of life of rural residents in our numerous villages. The overall quality of life they are expected to lead is determined by the degree of the fulfilment of the following human goals: individual, group, material and spiritual, as postulated by Susanna Eun (1985). These goals are expected to lead to the formulation of communication policy in the new technology that would lead to the provision of basic human needs, such as nourishment, shelter, clothing, health, etc; etc.

The Political and Cultural Realities of the New Media Technologies

Ordinarily, mankind, in all the countries of the world, irrespective of political leanings and ideologies, would have thought that the advent of the new communication and information technologies would lead to accelerated development in the Third World. This has not been the case. It is still a hallucination to think that the new communication technologies are independent phenomena that would create new societies and new human conditions as our previous section had outlined. A Third World critic of the new media, Dongshin Lee, (1985), is convinced that "advanced communication technologies such as computer networks and satellite broadcasting systems were introduced to many Third World countries only to worsen the cultural and financial dependency upon the advanced nations". The new communication technologies do not only have extensive potentials to widen the North-South information gap, but also the capability of promoting and consolidating Western cultural and economic dominance. Since the debate on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) began, there has been very little change, if any, in the flow of information and media contents along the North-South information axis, (Uche, 1985).

Communication and Information experts have identified two dimensions to the debate on new world information and communication order. One aspect of the debate is concerned

with fairness (objectivity) in the media contents (bad news coverage) that gives negative picture of African and other Third World nations by the mass media of the industrialized world. The other area of the debate deals with the uneven flow of information that virtually gives a monopoly of dissemination of media products that assault and threaten to submerge and subdue the cultures of the developing countries, (Uche, 1985: 283-289).

While academics seem to be concerned with both media content and information flow and balance between the North and the South, bureaucrats and other administrators in governments and related parastatals and agencies are not at all only concerned with the research orientations and problems the academics have identified by relating to the contents of the new channels that also gave rise to the debate, but rather, they (administrators and bureaucrats) are primarily concerned with the economic data that are transmitted daily across national borders for the benefit of transnational corporations, (Uche, 1985; Artwood and Murphy, 1982). Also implicit in the latter's concern is the identification of the potential for direct satellite broadcasting and the use of earth-scanning satellites.

All these pose many problems in the national security of politically and economically weak nations in Africa, Latin America, Asia, etc; etc. In this regard, the following fair and honest evaluation of this aspect of the new broadcast technology by a former director of the United States Information Agency, (Nordenstreng and Schiller, 1979: 30) buttresses our point:

Long before a direct broadcast satellite there will be electronic networks - some of them already in operation - which will pose realistic questions about information flow and cultural integrity These networks will move massive amounts of information through high-speed circuits across national boundaries. Moreover, they will be effectively beyond the reach of the traditional forms of censorship and control. The only way to "censor" electronic network moving 648 million bits per second is literally to pull the plug. The international extension of electronic mail transmission, data packet networks and information-bank retrieval systems in future

years will have considerably more effect on national cultures than any direct broadcast systems

Also, the transmission of economic data to the enrichment of multi-national corporations and to the disadvantage of the developing nations, through the new technologies, is perceptively summarized by Herbert I. Schiller, (*Ibid*) an acclaimed American communications scholar:

It requires little imagination to predict who will have control of and access to these (new) electronic networks IBM now sits astride the global computer market. Poor nations and voiceless subgroups within countries, developed and nondeveloped, are and will probably be shut out from these powerful new capabilities of administration and governance. Unless there is social mobilization and awareness, not now apparent, further domination and dependency will be the likely accompaniments of the extension of the new information technology.

That the new information technology is synonymous with domination and dependency is also further attested to by the following account that Schiller (*Ibid*) further presents:

.....a minority report of a Brazilian government inquiry on the impact of the multinational corporations in Brazil, found that 'the multinationals have concentrated on producing expensive goods, such as automobiles and colour television sets, that demand a concentration of income so more debts have been built up to finance the consumption of luxury goods instead of satisfying the minimum necessities of nutrition, health, housing, and employment.

It is now quite obvious that the coming of new communication and information technologies has brought along with them new systems of governance; a new system that is quite technologically sophisticated. A nation's national interest and security are the guiding factors in any

selection and adoption of the new information and communication technologies. The advent of new technologies makes information gathering and dissemination no longer the exclusive preserve of governments and their agencies because the technologies are making information easily accessible to those multinational corporations that are richer than most governments of the developing world. The following insight Schiller (*Ibid*) provides on the political and economic involvements of the Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) is quite revealing:

.....in the workings of a worldwide market economy certain centres dominate for a variety of economic and socio-historical reasons. The normal operation of the system presupposes that capital is exported to places where the return is attractive, industrial facilities are created in new locations, workers are recruited, and production is expanded (or contracted) according to market demand. New social classes emerge, and old social formations are disbanded. Transnational (and local) media participate vigorously in the process, both as profit-making business with products to sell and as promotional and marketing agents in the system overall. However, if the basic patterns of capitalistic enterprise in a country seem threatened, intentionality replaces the less deliberate processes of conventional system maintenance. When this does in fact occur, the role assigned to the media is large indeed. For it is to be expected that the transnational media will do everything they can to rally support for the political "climate" that they find hospitable.

In our determination to reinforce our public policy as it affects dissemination of information and ownership pattern, the following revelations by Schiller (*Ibid*) are quite instructive:

..... where the power of the MNC (Multi-National Corporation) and its allies in the media and intelligence services can be introduced effectively development that attempts to take a direction contrary to MNC criteria is thwarted and overturned.

Coups generally are a last resort and are undertaken only when the situation has gotten out of hand In the less developed and economically feeble Third World countries, the elites, possessing little or no domestic infrastructure of economic support, are more often than not, the visible spokesmen and direct intermediaries of the resident MNCs.

Finally, Schiller concludes his litany of offences of the multinational corporations with the following shocking insights:

Accompanying the corruption of political life is the political infiltration and utilization of the local media beyond the "normal" penetration effected through commercial arrangements. In addition to the flooding of foreign economies with commercial TV programs, films, published materials, and tourists, foreign-based news organizations and publishing companies are infiltrated. This accomplishment has the neat effect of controlling the flow of international information in all directions.

The Demand for Government Divestiture of Media Ownership

In view of these numerous revelations of how the international economic market systems that invent, manufacture and sell the media hardwares work very hard to exist for the economic and political control of the less powerful and weak nations is the call by the privileged, elitist Nigerian intellectuals and financiers for the government to divest itself of media ownership and, to hand them over to a few opportuned and privileged Nigerians, in order? Nigeria's mixed economy of state ownership and private ownership makes the timing of the demand for total privatization not propitious at present. The constant explosions in new communication technologies for the dissemination of information, most of which threaten the sovereignties of the weak and less powerful nations, make it imperative for a more dynamic communication and information policy that guarantees Nigeria's and other African countries' national

security, defence purposes and their sovereignty and integrity to be formulated.

The dimensions of modern communication hardware make it imperative for the governments of the developing countries (including those in Africa) not to get isolated by allowing big multinationals, through their local fronts, to take over the moulding, and control of their nationals' public opinion, thus leading to the mortgaging of their hard won independence. This would be tantamount to recolonization through giant international and local businesses paving the way for the second coming of colonization.

The development of modern communication media hardware is equally leading to appropriate information policies in all the nations of the world.. Modern systems of mass communication are no longer the simple paraphernalia they used to be, solely used for dissemination of information. They are increasingly getting extremely sophisticated and economically and politically allied to the military power of the powerful nations that have invested heavily on nuclear weapons, ready for doomsday as well as the subjugation of the less privileged nations. It is doubtful if any nation can, at this stage in modern warfare and development of communication technology, win any of its battles without integrating the most advanced modern communication technologies. We are all aware of the jamming of radars in military confrontations of recent times. We are also aware of similar jamming of radio stations to stifle public opinions of weaker nations.

If Nigerian and most African countries are stampeded into handing over the most vital and sensitive information systems in their countries to private enterprises, what then becomes their fate when a mad man or a saboteur acquires any of the sophisticated communication technologies? An example will suffice: when the United States spaceship, The Challenger, crashed immediately it was blasted off for its space mission, initial news reports suggested the probability of ham (amateur) radio operators interfering apparently with The Challenger's communication systems, leading to the short circuiting of its systems. Even though official probe findings blamed top officials for negligence, resulting from over-used systems that failed to function when The Challenger was blasted off, the possibility of an amateur radio operator using his electronics gadget to short circuit The Challenger's

system remains. The question the U.S. experience raises is: if African nations continue to rely on the communication technology of the industrialized North, can they afford privatization of the media at this time of their national development (where tribal and religious loyalties come first before patriotism for the nation) to the extent that national security and integrity are endangered?

It is instructive, at this juncture, to inform the nationals of Africa and other Third World nations that in the United States there is a Federal Government agency known as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that exists to allocate frequencies, supervise and license radio AM, FM and TV stations. Licenses are granted for a period of three years and are renewable for another three-year period provided the station owners show evidence of having met the *needs, interests and necessities* of the communities in which they are located. Once any citizenship group petitions the FCC, accusing a particular station of violating any of the numerous guidelines for which it was licensed, the FCC institutes a fair hearing. If, at the end of such a hearing, a station is found guilty, its license is either withdrawn and the station sold to another competitor, or its license is renewed for a period less than the normal three years, or it gets a warning.

It is also interesting to note that in a capitalistic country like the United States, with a laissez-faire economic practices, individuals and groups are restricted as to the number of radio and TV stations to be owned. It was not until August 1984 that the FCC revoked a 1948 seven station rule that placed a ceiling on multiple station ownership from 7 television, 7 FM and 7 AM radio stations to 12 stations in each case, (Levin, 1986: 25-28). The FCC law also forbids any foreign participation in ownership of any radio or TV station. If a nation that was founded on a free enterprise, a nation as old as 212 years, is still carefully controlling and regulating its broadcast media industry, is it really to Nigeria's and Africa's interest (mostly 'infants' of approximately 30 years old when compared with a giant adult like the U.S.) to privatize their media industry? Is such a policy in the interest of a continent of numerous and autonomous nationalities, where national loyalty only recently began to rapidly evolve; a development that only started after many devastating civil and liberation wars and other natural catastrophes and disasters.

It is also instructive to remind those agitating for privatization that as old as Western European nations that colonized Africa are, the broadcast media in some of these countries are still public utilities, under direct government supervision and control. It was only a few years ago that an independent broadcasting authority was allowed to operate and compete with the publicly-owned BBC in Britain. In France, the government owns and controls the broadcasting industry. Its director-general retires with the government that appoints him/her. A suggestion a couple of years ago on privatization triggered off hostile reactions from the French public.

At this stage in our development process in Africa, it will be too dear a price to pay if, for purely economic reasons, African governments formulate public information policies that allow ultimate private ownership of the electronic media. The various national communication policies should be such as to make sure that the media that are public utilities. Consequently members of boards of directors should be appointed to represent every spectrum of the society. No government should dictate to editors and reporters what to publish. Our democracy should be reflected in our media contents. It is therefore the view of this paper that privatization of the broadcast industry in a continent as tribally divisive as Africa is, where the ethnic sentiment and loyalty take precedence over nationalism and patriotism, more especially at this level of development and increasing dependence for economic survival on the industrialized North, and her heavy international debt burdens, should not be rushed.

If we must privatize, we should not start with ownership of electronic media but begin privatization with the manufacturing of components like transmitters, integrated circuits, TV picture tubes, stereo sets, cassette sets, stereo amplifiers, loudspeakers, capacitors, etc. etc. all of which are pre-requisites for self-reliance and final ownership of the electronic media by the private sector. There is, of course, a political motive, more than economic, as the ultimate immediate drive toward privatization of the basic public industries all over Nigeria and some African countries at this time of level of development in technology. It is being spearheaded by the nouveau riche who want power and not

orderly development, to back up and defend their wealth.

One of Nigeria's renowned scholars in the field of mass communication, late Frank Okwu Ugboajah (1976), in one of his studies, discovered that government-owned media in Nigeria were very independent. He found no evidence of any government interference. The following are his assessments:

Government ownership of the media... does not...lead to control on free flow of information as generally is the apprehension in some intellectual circles. The mass media in Nigeria still function in their normal cultural way, and the ownership of newspaper by state governments, rather than bring tighter control on mass media performance in Nigeria, lends variety and flexibility to their performance by offering alternative media voices...

In this revealing study, Ugboajah (Ibid) was convinced that "expanding state media ownership in Nigeria should be viewed as a healthy sign of media proliferation and an expansion of media voices rather than a signal of government control". What worried Ugboajah most, rather than misconceptions about government ownership of the mass media in some intellectual circles, as he asserted, was the parochial orientation of the mass media. The following lamentations of his is a further indication of non-government interference in mass media management, as he (Ibid) perceived it at the time of his study:

Mass media behaviour appears moulded by the fact of geographical administrative location, *independent of ownership* Their attitude is usually a function of geographical location more than ownership, and certainly guided by the ethnic constituencies (they) serve.

There couldn't be a better vindication of government participation in the mass media enterprise and policy of non-interference than Ugboajah's objective assessment, devoid of any sentiment. This does not, however, mean that successive Nigerian governments, since Ugboajah's study, have been respecting this tradition. Administrative contingencies have had tremendous impact.

Discussion

The trend in modern mass communication technological developments and practices in information dissemination seems to suggest continued dominance and (imposition?) of the cultural, economic, and political values and preferences of the technologically advanced and industrialized societies with the most modern and sophisticated communication and information hardwares, and comfortably developed media bases from which most of the world's news sources originate. This trend does not take cognizance of the national needs, commitments, cultural autonomy, security and sovereignty of the developing countries, as constituting the framework of the information, telecommunication and mass media policies of these nations with pitiable weak political and economic bases, where expert manpower is non-existent to develop a technological base.

In this article, we have not only identified some of the major new media, but have also detailed the national and international ramifications of their selection and adoption as privately-owned enterprises. If privatized, their owners could be fronting for the multinational corporations. The thesis of this paper is that our national interests, especially economic self-sufficiency in food production and industrialization, political stability that guarantees our various African nations' territorial integrity and its indivisibility, and preservation of our culture, make it imperative for a careful evaluation, assessment and examination of the development of our present media structure and ownership.

If the audio cassettes that contained the revolutionary instigations of Ayatola Khomeini who was in exile in France, which were smuggled into Iran, triggered off the revolt against the Shah and his eventual overthrow; and spliced-up tape of events at the Manila International Airport on the day Benigno Aquino was assassinated and his funeral, as captured by videocassette recorder (VCR), could provoke a democratic revolution in the Philippines that toppled a dictator, it means that the new media, in the predictions of Nora C. Quebral (1985: 199) "could potentially be used to foment revolution of another kind in politically unstable countries" From the foregoing, it therefore means that

constant technological break-throughs in the communication and information field make public policy formulation to be adapted to *risk* and *uncertainty*, especially in the developing countries that depend on advanced communication technologies that come from outside their political spheres of jurisdiction.

Ideally, a technologically developed or developing country would naturally have no problem deciding what public information policy to choose, among available options, after a thorough analysis, examination and appraisal of "all possible courses of action and their possible consequences and after an evaluation of those consequences" (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1970: 40) in the light of its values. But presently, the rate of technological development in the African continent and other poverty-stricken Third World countries has not synchronized with their societies' values, as none of their information hardware is locally-produced. One fact that obviously surfaces from this article on National Communication Policy for Nigeria as they relate to deregulation and privatization and/or deregulation of media ownership, and as they also affect the sovereignty of the nation, its cultural values and democratization of the communication media, is that the new communication technologies may submerge the cultures of the less developed nations, thereby threatening their sovereignties, due to a perpetuated economic dependence that may weaken their political base. Our package of information policy involves the totality of a nation's experience in all spheres of her human endeavour. Major developments and accomplishments in all sectors of any society form the basis of its information policy, as predicated by national interest.

In the absence of locally advanced and developed technologies in the communication and information field in the developing Third World nations, of which Nigeria is a part, it will not be appropriate to identify policy-making, policy analysis and decision-making with problem-solving in the field of communication/information - a field that is witnessing an explosion of new discoveries, with each new invention rendering obsolete a previously acquired hardware. Presently, Third World developing nations have no challenge to pose as an alternative to check Western cultural dominance, through information technologies, based on the

existing realities in their framework in policy formulation and implementation.

It therefore means that as of now we rather treat policy as it concerns mass communication and cultural identity as an intellectual issue, rather than as a practical guide in an era of Advanced Information Technology (AIT) where the Third World nations have found themselves at the mercy of the industrialized societies that invent and manufacture the communication hardware. Perhaps in the future, Third World scientists in the relevant technologies in communication and information processing, could be the most influential actors in the new media policy option, in their respective countries.

Conclusion

The battle for using mass communication for the projection of the cultural values of the various social systems of the world has been fought, won and lost. This is a fact we must admit. It is a victory for the warlords of the technologically industrialized societies of the North. The battle strategy was plotted at the era of the industrial revolution, and spanned through the periods of colonialism, independence, neo-colonialism and post-industrialism.

Each technological breakthrough in the science of information and communication was heralded by a deceptive optimism and belief that it would expand cultural horizons by transmitting those ideas, values and habits of the various cultures that portray the diversity of mankind, especially as part of the communicative activities includes the transmission of a cultural heritage from one generation to another (Wright, 1975).

The technological breakthrough in communication / information hardwares, mostly being invented and processed in the industrialized Western societies and a few other developing nations in Asia, are increasingly widening the information imbalance and cultural dependence between the industrialized and most developing nations in the Third World. This places the multinational corporations in extremely privileged and advantageous positions in economic data gathering as information is an economy of scale. This could definitely lead to the perpetual economic and political enslavement of the less economically viable and politically

stable nations in Africa and other areas of the Third World.

The trend in modern mass communication technological countries, seems to suggest the inevitable imposition of the cultural, economic and political values and preferences of the societies with the most advanced communication and information technologies and the media source countries, from where most of the world's news sources originate. This is a threat to the national sovereignty of the dependent countries. The consequence is that the cultural values, national aspirations, economic needs and political independence of the developing nations are not taken into consideration. The danger of the threat to cultural autonomy and national sovereignty is that the rapid speed with which new communication and information technologies spread will entail greater curtailing of freedom of self-expression and that of the media in the developing countries of Africa and the Third World.

Our prediction is that most of the developing world will practically resort to denial of free speech and will increasingly use autocratic means to censor and interfere with the individual's and society's right to fundamental freedoms and that of the communication media. Governments in the media dependent countries or peripheral countries will increasingly get involved in media ownership, especially in the area of the electronic media, solely to protect what remains of their national interests, cultural identity, preservation of their territorial integrity and the indivisibility of their nations. All these anticipated actions could also be an exercise in futility because, currently, African governments and their counterparts in other areas of the Third World, have no effective challenge to pose to the Western communication technologies as alternatives to check foreign cultural dominance, through advanced information technologies.

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