INTRODUCTION

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Is Cultural Diversity Under Threat?

In June 1999, Bhutan, the Himalayan Land of the Thunder Dragon, became the last nation on earth to switch on television. The king lifted the ban on the small screen as part of a radical plan to modernize his isolated mountain kingdom and boost the gross national happiness. The country had traditionally restricted tourism and emphasized spirituality and environmental protection over rampant capitalism. Suddenly, however, an idyllic and peaceful tantric Buddhist culture that had barely changed in centuries, with little access in rural areas to electricity or telecommunications, let alone the Internet, was bombarded by about four dozen cable channels, broadcasting mainly imported programs.[1] For cable subscribers, the nightly onslaught opened the world of Posh and Becks, of *Larry King Live* and *The Simpsons*, of the World Wrestling Federation and *American Idol*, of Bollywood soap operas, of music videos and reality TV, of *CNN* and *BBC World News*. The country plugged into the Internet the following year. All too soon reporters noted Bhutan's first wave of crimes – murder, fraud, drug offenses. Bhutan had suddenly crash-landed in the 21st century. Public concern quickly mounted over threats to the country's unique culture. The letters page in local newspapers featured columns of worried correspondence: 'Dear Editor, TV is very bad for our country; it controls our minds . . . and makes [us] crazy. The enemy is right here with us in our own living room. People behave like the actors, and are now anxious, greedy and discontented.'[2] Others expressed concern that a

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gulf had opened up between the old Bhutan and the new. One minister observed, 'Until recently, we shied away from killing insects, and yet now we Bhutanese are asked to watch people on TV blowing heads off with shotguns. Will we now be blowing each other's heads off?'[3] Television was widely blamed for a host of social ills, whether weakening spiritual values, undermining ancient traditions, inciting fraud, encouraging material consumerism, destroying family life, or provoking murder among a peaceable people. In response to public concern, in 2006 the government established a new ministry and regulatory authority to determine Bhutan's communication policy, including protecting vulnerable sectors of the public from the effects of excessive violence, obscenity, and drug taking.[4] But was the introduction of TV a major cause of these problems? Will access to modern information and communication technologies erode Bhutan's traditional Buddhist culture and its feudal society? Will wrestling displace the national sport of archery, will English be spoken instead of Dzongkha and Sharchop, and will jeans be worn instead of the *gho* and *kira*? Or are these concerns exaggerated?

Bhutan is perhaps the most dramatic recent example of a developing country adapting to an electronic invasion, but it is far from alone; most societies have experienced a flood of information from diverse channels originating far beyond local communities and national borders. Ideas and images are transmitted from society to society through terrestrial, cable, and satellite television and radio stations, feature films, DVDs, and video games, books, newspapers, and magazines, advertising, the music industry and the audiovisual arts, the digital world of the Internet, Web sites, Tivo, streaming YouTube videos, iPod players, podcasts, wikis, and blogs, as well as through interpersonal connections via mobile cellular and fixed-line telephony, social networking Web sites (like MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter), e-mail, VoIP (Skype), and instant text messaging. The world has come to our front door.

These profound changes are widely observed. But the consequences – especially the impact of the penetration of the mass media into geographically isolated cultures that were previously stranded at the periphery of modern communication grids – are far from clear. What happens to distant rural communities in Bhutan, as well as far-flung districts and remote provinces in Burkina Faso, Burma, and

Afghanistan, once the world connects directly to these places and the people living in them learn more about the world? In particular, will this process generate cultural convergence around modern values, and will national diversity be threatened?

Debate about the supposed peril arising from 'cultural imperialism,' 'Coca-colonization,' or 'McDonaldization' has raged for almost half a century. Nor is this a dated remnant of the cold war era; new protectionist cultural policies have been implemented during the past few years, including those by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the European Union. At its heart, this book develops a new theoretical framework and provides systematic evidence to support the argument. We hypothesize that the expansion of information flowing primarily from the global North to South will have the greatest impact on converging values in cosmopolitan societies characterized by integration into world markets, freedom of the press, and widespread access to the media. Parochial societies lacking these conditions are less likely to be affected by these developments. Moreover, within countries, many poor sectors continue to lack the resources and skills necessary to access modern communication technologies. Important social psychological barriers further limit the capacity of the media to alter enduring values and attitudes. A failure to take account of the role of these sequential firewalls has commonly led to exaggerated assessments of the risks to national diversity. These conditions are not confined to the most hermetically sealed and rigidly controlled autocracies, such as Burma and North Korea, or to isolated villages and provincial communities off the mass communication grid in Tibet, Bhutan, and Mali; instead, these barriers are found in many parts of the world. This book outlines these ideas and then lays out the evidence, drawing on the World Values Survey, which covers 95 countries worldwide from 1981 to 2007. The mixed-method research design combines hierarchical linear models, cross-sectional time-series analysis, and selected qualitative case studies. The broad comparative framework and the wide-ranging evidence make it possible to test the core propositions empirically. The concluding chapter considers the implications for cultural policies.

Let us start by clarifying our central concepts and reviewing the controversy surrounding cosmopolitan communications and then outline how this book proceeds in more detail.

Why Cosmopolitan Communications Are Believed to Threaten Cultural Diversity

The starting point for our study is the observation that mass communications have been profoundly affected by the broader phenomenon of globalization – the process of expanding networks of interdependence spanning national boundaries, which follows the increasingly swift movement of ideas, money, goods, services, ecology, and people across territorial borders. Globalization is understood here to be multidimensional, encompassing *economic* aspects, such as the flow of trade, labor, and capital; *social* aspects, such as interpersonal contacts and mediated information flows; and *political* dimensions, including the integration of countries into international and regional organizations.[5] Strictly speaking, most mass communications are not and have not become *global* (meaning covering all parts of the world); rather, communications are in the process of becoming increasingly networked and exchanged across nation-states. These developments render territorial borders more permeable and open to external forces – making most places increasingly similar to bustling Heathrow, JFK, and Schiphol international airports and less like the isolated capitals of Pyongyang, Ashgabat, and Naypyidaw. In this study, globalization is understood to be a complex phenomenon that should not be confused with 'modernization,' 'Westernization,' or 'Americanization,' as the term is sometimes used.[6] By some measures, many smaller countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, Estonia, Hungary, and Israel, are more highly integrated into the world economy than is the United States.[7] Moreover, insofar as basic values are shifting, such countries as Sweden, the Netherlands, and Australia are more at the cutting edge of this process than the United States, although these changes are sometimes mistakenly dubbed 'Americanization.'[8]

Globalization is far from a novel phenomenon; it has occurred historically in periodic waves, whether driven by free trade, population migrations, military conquests, technology, or religious conversions.[9] Arguably both the Roman Empire and medieval Europe under Charlemagne represented earlier manifestations of this trend. The invention of the postal service, electronic telegraph, iron railway, and steamship during the industrial age connected once-distant lands. Networks of 19th-century traders, missionaries, soldiers, and diplomats linked

peoples and places. Globalization has experienced eras of advance and retreat. Seen as an ongoing process, globalization is conceptualized as a work in progress rather than as an end state. But as we will demonstrate, the late 20th century witnessed a decisive acceleration in the scale, density, and velocity of interactions that cut across national boundaries.

Due to these developments, places that were once isolated and remote are now increasingly interconnected. Evidence of this phenomenon is all around us. As the authors sit in Massachusetts and Michigan, respectively, we follow real-time news of events in Darfur or Baghdad on our laptops and BlackBerries. Headlines about Barack Obama's victory instantly surged around the globe, connecting Kenyans celebrating in local villages with Americans rejoicing in Times Square. Travelers have access to Internet cafes in Bali, CNN in Doha Airport, or *Die Hard* movies in Beijing. Satellite TV from Al Jazeera and Al Arabia broadcasts reality television shows, music clips, and news images to 200 million Arab speakers from Morocco to Syria. People living in Belgium, the Netherlands, or Switzerland can receive dozens of foreign-language channels from Britain, Germany, Italy, and France on their cable TV. Mexican and Brazilian telenovelas are ubiquitous on Latin American television, as are American sitcoms in Canada, Australian soaps in Britain, British crime series in the United States, and Bollywood movies in South Asia. Reuters, Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse transmit foreign stories to newsrooms around the world. International markets are linked in real time by Bloomberg Business News, the Dow Jones, and related financial tickers. Telecenters in Bangalore and Toronto help Microsoft customers in London, Berlin, and Sydney. Cell phones and text messages instantly connect émigré Mexican, Chinese, and Turkish workers with news from relatives back home. Younger Americans and Europeans take all this for granted today, but it is striking to recall how rapidly it has transformed lives; the World Wide Web, born in 1989, is still in its adolescence.[10]

Multiple developments have expanded the volume and pace of information flowing across national borders. This process operates through the direct transfer of people – for example, through international travel, foreign tourism, and emigration. It happens through interpersonal communications, via the traditional flow of overseas

postal mail, international phone calls, telegrams, and faxes, and more recently through person-to-person e-mails and text messages. Today the process also increasingly works through the diverse channels of mass communications. These include traditional printed publications (the overseas trade in newspapers, magazines, and books) and audiovisual media (the international market in radio and television news and entertainment programs, foreign videos, DVDs, movies and feature films, popular music, and transnational TV satellite and cable broadcasts), as well as the complicated flow occurring via more recent forms of digital information technologies, some of which blend the interpersonal with mass communications (typically via Web sites, online videos, blogs, virtual communities, interactive video games, and listserve e-mails).[11]

The concept of 'cosmopolitan' communications emphasizes the channels that increasingly bind people living in diverse communities and nation-states together. The word 'cosmopolitan,' which derives from the Greek word *kosmopolitês* (citizen of the world), refers to the idea that all humans increasingly live and interact within a single global community, not simply within a single polity or nation-state.[12] The conceptual distinction between cosmopolitans and locals has been part of the social sciences at least since Robert Merton developed it to study small-town America during World War II.[13] In recent years, the concept of cosmopolitanism has come back into vogue as an increasingly popular way to rethink processes of democracy for the purpose of extending these principles to international life. The idea of cosmopolitan democracy emphasizes that the principles of democracy should operate within states, but also among states and at the global level; one of the relevant issues is how citizens can organize collectively in civil society and have their voices heard in multilateral organizations beyond the boundaries of the nation-state.[14] In the same way, the idea of cosmopolitan communications can fruitfully be applied to conceptualizing the growing phenomenon of information flows that cut across state borders. Communications traditionally were far more provincial and territorial – binding together friends and neighbors living in local villages, towns, and regions through social meetings and voluntary organizations, local newspapers, community radio stations, and face-to-face interpersonal connections. The change over time should not be overstated; links between national elites have

always been maintained through international networks, through, for example, foreign correspondents, diplomatic missions, and UN agencies and bureaus. Mobile populations have always traveled back and forth across territorial national borders, whether as footloose tourists, colonists, students, exiles, expatriate employees, labor migrants, rootless nomads, or members of diaspora communities spread over multiple states. In the contemporary era, however, connections among peoples living in different nations have often become far more cosmopolitan, with multiple information networks linking the lives of strangers from distant lands. The idea of 'cosmopolitan communications' is understood here, most simply, to be the way that we learn about, and interact with, people and places beyond the borders of our nation-state. This concept is thus far broader and more comprehensive than the idea of 'transnational' media – referring to specific communication channels and sources that are designed to reach a multinational audience, exemplified by BBC World, CNN International, Reuters, and Al Jazeera.[15]

From National to Cosmopolitan Communications

Multiple factors contributed to the growth of cosmopolitan communications.[16] In many nations, broadcasting and telecommunications were deregulated. Protectionist trade barriers were lifted. Access to the mass media widened. Innovative technologies permeated societies. Multinational media corporations expanded their empires. As a result, nations have often increasingly encountered a rising tide of ideas and images imported from abroad.

During the height of the modern era of national communications, spanning the period from the rise of radio broadcasting in the early 20th century until at least the early 1980s, with a few exceptions public service corporations throughout continental Western Europe enjoyed a monopoly on the airwaves. Broadcasting operated as a nationally owned public utility monopoly, with the distribution of radio and then television licenses overseen by the postal, telegraph, and telephone authorities. Public broadcasting corporations were subject to periodic review in the issuance and renewal of licenses, modeled after the BBC. They often operated following principles of impartial balance across all major parties, with a mission to educate and entertain, although some, such as French and Greek TV, were more closely aligned with the state. The rationale for this system included spectrum scarcity and

the need to provide a universal service in the public interest, as well as
the powerful role of broadcasters. There were some important varia-
tions in this pattern, however; Britain, Australia, and Japan operated
a dual public service and commercial system from the 1950s onward,
while the United States and Luxembourg favored private enterprise.
Meanwhile, state broadcasters directly controlled the airwaves in Cen-
tral and Eastern Europe, and most developing countries operated a mix
of public service and state broadcasting. During this era, most local,
regional, and national newspapers, magazines, and book publishers
were usually domestically owned, with legal regulations often limit-
ing the extent of foreign investment. Some major publications were
widely distributed on the international market, but this revenue was
usually subsidiary to domestic sales. In Europe, the major national
production companies in the creative industries and the performing
arts were also often run as public corporations. The operating costs
of national opera companies, theatrical productions, and musical per-
formances were commonly subsidized by the nation-state, as part of
its cultural heritage, in common with national museums, art galleries,
and archeological historical sites.

Of course, this process should again not be exaggerated; cultural
trade on international markets was important for certain sectors, even
during the golden years of the national era. The motion picture industry
has always been heavily reliant on overseas sales for generating rev-
enues; such sales have been important for Hollywood but especially
for production companies based in countries with a limited domestic
audience.[17] The recording music industry based in the United States,
Europe, and Japan was also highly export oriented, and this was espe-
cially true for major players such as EMI, Sony, and Bertelsmann.[18]
Many news outlets with limited resources for overseas bureaus and cor-
respondents have also always relied heavily on Western news agency
wire services for international news and foreign affairs coverage, with
distant correspondents networked by telegraph, submarine cable, tele-
type, and wireless and communication satellites.[19] Books, periodicals,
magazines, and newspapers have always relied on a proportion of
their revenues from overseas sales. The trade in television programs
is also long established, and U.S. exports were particularly important,
as Tunstall reminds us, when broadcasting systems were first being set
up in many countries during the late 1950s and 1960s and insufficient

facilities existed for domestic productions.[20] Once established, how-ever, in most places the broadcasting and newspaper industries were usually home owned, nationally regulated, and designed primarily to serve a domestic audience; the British Broadcasting Corporation, *Le Figaro*, and *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rund-funkanstalten Deutschlands* (German ARD) reflected their local ori-gins, as distinctive as the Paris Opera, the Drury Lane theater, or Die Berliner Philharmoniker.

The liberalization of public service broadcasting and telecommuni-cation monopolies, which occurred in many countries during the 1980s and 1990s, led to the rapid proliferation of more loosely regulated commercial or privately owned TV and radio channels and telecom-munication companies. The new channels of commercial broadcast-ing also fueled the expansion of mass advertising and encouraged the growth of transnational advertising and market research companies. The print sector has also been affected by growing foreign ownership of newspapers and multinational publishing companies, as well as by cross-media ownership that seeks vertical integration across delivery platforms, linking books, magazines, and newspapers with movies, videos, DVDs, and advertising.

Technological developments have also played a major role in this process, shaping the way business, society, and governments work, function, and interact throughout the world, bringing multiple changes to everyday life.[21] The rapid expansion of access to new information and communication technologies from the mid-1990s onward and media convergence across platforms accelerated the pace of inter-changes across state boundaries through the panoply of electronic mail and text messaging, mobile phones, online Web sites and blogs, and related developments.[22] Television broadcasting was transformed by the growth of satellite broadcasting and cable programming, and there were important innovations in digital technologies associated with the rise of the Internet, mobile cell phones, and multimedia convergence. Today multiple sources of entertainment, news, and information vie for attention in the most media rich environments – from feature films to YouTube videos, from headlines on the BBC World Service to CNN, and from blogs to networked e-mails – only some of which are locally or nationally based. These profound developments have had the greatest impact in advanced industrial societies, where many