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Debating NWICO and WSIS: A Historical Perspective

Licentiate’s Thesis
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Abstract

Xu, Peixi: Debating NWICO and WSIS: A Historical Perspective (105 pages) Licentiate’s Thesis University of Tampere Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, January 2008

The thesis gives a historical review and analysis to the process from the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO, 1976-1984) to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2003-2005). With the support of the Socialist East, the Non-Aligned South initiated the NWICO movement at the end of the 1970s in order to challenge the unfair international communication mechanism dominated by the Capitalist West. The multilateral negotiations on NWICO lasted for almost ten years at various UN platforms until the US and the UK withdrew from UNESCO. At the dawn of the 21st century, the political, market and civil society forces met twice at WSIS summits in Geneva and Tunis, continuing to pursue topics such as Internet governance and intellectual property rights.

NWICO and WSIS are not only international communication activities by themselves but also international communication regulation events and media events, and constitute a sound sample for international communication research. The thesis adopts a debating formula to describe and analyze this sample. These debates consist of both academic debates and political ones. Chapter 1 introduces the composition of the thesis. Chapter 2 and 3 respectively introduce the dominant academic paradigm and political process of NWICO. Chapter 4 and 5 respectively introduce the dominant academic paradigm and political process of WSIS. Chapter 6 puts everything together and meanwhile comes to several important conclusions regarding this historical process. These academic and political debates contribute not only to the understanding of their relationship but also to the understanding of various topics regarding media systems, international communication regulation, and international communication research.

As far as the media system is concerned, the thesis reviews critically how the market-controlled media system has been defended in global forums. While a state-controlled media system is in no case compatible with communication democratization, neither does a profit-oriented media system constitute a sufficient condition for such democratization. In the aspect of international communication regulation, the thesis argues that both the Newly Industrialized Countries and the civil society forces pose themselves as the challengers of the international communication rule-makers, an alignment of transnational corporations and Western polities. The appeals of the latter, however, come closer to the core of communication democratization. In terms of international communication research, the study concludes with a promotion of such perspectives like human rights, the right to communicate, and civil society and the intellectual elements embedded outside Western intellectual traditions.

Key Words: NWICO, WSIS, history
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Preface

On 13-14 April 2002, my Chinese Supervisor Professor Guo Zhenzhi organized “International Relations and Cultural Communication” conference and I was responsible for some coordinating matters with foreign scholars. At the time, I had just completed four years study on Chinese and English literature at Beijing International Studies University and went to the Beijing Broadcasting Institute to study a brand new major – Communication Studies. Before the starting of the conference, Professor Paul S. N. Lee of the Chinese University of Hong Kong predicted that the conference would be very “interesting” because the invited scholars included two confronting schools of thinkers: the critical political economists and the cultural studies scholars.

The conference turned out to be exactly like what he predicted, with heated discussions on various topics between these scholars coupled with some nationalistic voices from a few Chinese scholars. My academic trajectory was brewed at that conference. As a typical product of the Chinese educational system, diligent but with no habits of independent thinking, and with some preliminary understanding about Communication Studies acquired when preparing my graduate program examination, I was only able to observe the heat in those discussions but not to understand the essence. Chinese scholars such as Li Bin, Chen Weixing, Hu Zhengrong and Joseph Man Chan attended the conference. The foreign participants of that conference consisted of Kaarle Nordenstreng, Jan Servaes, Janet Wasko, Emile McAnany, John Downing, Vincent Mosco, John Sinclair, George Barnett, Dan Schiller, Thomas Jacobson, Zhao Yuezhi and Hong Junhao. I came to know them while I was serving as the conference coordinator, local guide and translator.

I hadn’t anticipated the tremendous impact of that conference upon my academic career. Time flew away quickly. As a graduate student, I buried myself from 2002 to 2005 into some translating and teaching work. I had a vague feeling that I had deviated from my initial plan to become a researcher. Part of the reason for this deviation is an overheating and overexciting social and academic environment. Impatience, anxiety, and the eagerness for quick success and instant benefit come to characterize all social and academic groups in China. The quickening process of commercialization has put most of the Chinese onto a roller coaster high into the sky that we have lost control of our own life and the only thing we can do is to dive into this river of commercial culture, sip its poisonous taste, and shout out the pains without any clue about their origins.

Against these circumstances, Chinese graduate students in the field of social sciences suffer from a lack of almost all necessary conditions for independent thinking: funding, time and other institutionally friendly arrangements. I was one of them. I realized that I was being institutionalized and my curiosity about international communication aroused at the conference was fading away. But opportunity came on 11 July 2005, when Professor Kaarle Nordenstreng of the University of Tampere applied for me a funding for 8 months from the Finnish Center for International Mobility. In this way, I went to Finland on 1 September 2005 and began my doctorial study at the University of Tampere.

Finland represents a typical society model preferred by an ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi (a historical figure lived in 4th or 6th century BC): a small country with a few people (xiaoguoguamin). It is a heart-melting country in terms of both social and natural environment. People don’t care much about whether they are
holding the newest Nokia model but a lot about enjoying an urban life in woods and along the lakes. The white winter snow falls on multifarious kinds of trees and overlaps upon them; the full summer light shines upon the lakes, turns itself into gentle wind, and rings the wind-bell at the gates. These scenes reminded me of many of the ancient Chinese poems about nature. These poems were forced into my mind at primary school and did not meet the appropriate context to pop out until I came to Finland.

Thus, in the transition from the long nights to the long days, I began to look at my field of research again. University of Tampere provided all the necessary conditions for high thinking and a plain living. For the first time, I had my own office and a key which gave me access to almost every door of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. Half a year passed before I realized, when organizing my reading notes, that a central part of my reading was about the debate on cultural imperialism between the critical political economists and the cultural studies scholars (Chapter 2). The cue for this learning experience was already given three years earlier at the conference but my independent thinking and judgment of this debate and a corresponding political debate on a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) came only at this moment. I decided upon the targets of my research: NWICO and a more recent global communication regulation event—the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

Coincidentally, the courses and other academic activities organized that academic year by the University of Tampere offered a focus on this topic. On 7-11 November 2005, Professor Kaarle Nordenstreng lectured on the history of NWICO in a global journalism course. This strengthened my understanding about the political process of NWICO (Chapter 3). On 27 January 2006, Professor John Peters of the University of Iowa came to University of Tampere to introduce his new book Courting the Abyss: Free Speech and the Liberal Tradition. Inspired by his ideas, I went on to read other books he wrote. While reading his Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication, I came to realize the usefulness of his method of interpreting Walter Benjamin’s treatment of historical studies: historicism and constructivism. From 21 February to 8 March 2006, Professor Wolfgang Kleinwachter of University of Aarhus opened his two courses on WSIS and Internet governance. Participation in these courses strengthened my understanding about the ideas of some information society theorists (Chapter 4) and politics of WSIS (Chapter 5). My first draft of Chapter 4 was a review of the literature provided in Professor Kleinwachter’s courses.

On 30 May 2006, Professor Taisto Hujanen organized a seminar on public service broadcasting, in which several doctoral students and I were asked to comment on keynote speaker Professor Slavko Splichal’s book Principles of Publicity and Press Freedom. While preparing my comments, I established the Right to Communicate as the linking concept from NWICO to WSIS (Chapter 6). In addition, I had two chances to discuss my dissertation. One happened at the Conference English course and the challengers of my opinion were a group of doctoral students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the other occurred at a weekly gathering of doctoral students of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, at which Professor Risto Kunelius gave his valuable comments about the political economists and cultural studies scholars.

The first meeting between Lenin and Stalin was made at Tampere city of Finland in 1905. Russian city St. Petersburg is located several hundred miles away from Tampere. That is known in China as the place where the first gunshot of October Revolution
was shot and sent to China the message of Marxism. Nowadays, that gunshot is still resonating with the minds of many Chinese and triggering very mixed feelings. The knowledge revolution in my mind, however, had gone beyond these rumbling sounds from history and beyond the melodramatic seasonal changes in Finland.

For many years, there had been this little voice knocking my head, speaking silently the password of “open sesame.” The door to assess the treasure mountain of knowledge was then opened at this right time in this right place. The road leading to the future was right there. In this treasure mountain of knowledge, I was behaving like Ali Baba’s brother Cassim, picking up greedily the shining diamonds of knowledge and forgetting the password to walk out. Even if some day I could recover this password, I would still choose to stay, because the frequent visitors to this mountain are not vicious robbers, but honest thinkers. For me, they were communication researchers especially the critical communication scholars. This treasure mountain represented their ideas. Certainly, every discipline or field of research had their own treasure mountain. As for communication research, I ventured to start from these critical communication scholars and I was willing to take the consequences of forgetting the password.

On 1 July 2006, I went back to China. Ten months earlier I had forgotten to close the window of my small dark room at Beijing and the room was almost completely occupied with sands and dusts. Sandstorms carry an obvious mark of Made in China. There was little change in academic environment. I always had in mind my determination on academic study. Before my visit to Finland, I had no time and no clue about how to execute this determination. During my stay in Finland, I acquired both the time and the clue. After I came back to China, I was again occupied by some trivia matters, turning my attention away from serious academic thinking, but at least, I had the blessing of a clear mind.

At the Spring Festival 2006, I left Beijing for my hometown, a small village located in the south of Jiaozhou Bay in Shandong Province. The changes in this small village bewared me of another important difference of positions, if not the most important one, between some information society theorists and the political economists: ecological environment. Implied in the ideas of some information society theorists such as Alvin Toffler is an arrogant logic which assumes that the benefits of market will eventually spill over into the lowers reaches of river – the disadvantaged areas and people, and that the progress in technology will eventually overcome the bottleneck of ecological crisis. The political economists tell people to put on full alert to market and technology. They hold a pessimistic attitude toward the spillover of the benefits of the market into the lower reaches of river, and toward the possibility that market expansion and technologic progress would find solutions to the bottlenecks of ecology and the scarcity of resources. The picture in this small village, in Shandong Province, and in China provides evidence to the pessimistic view held by the political economists.

The natural environment in this village was fatally damaged, reminding me of every scene described by Rachel Carson in her *Silent Spring*. The river runs dry. Sparrows and pied magpies manage to survive but are deprived of the right to sleep in trees. Pied magpies build their nests on telephone poles. The most eyes-catching scene on the highlands of the winter open country was a colossal cable wire grid system. The electricity produced by Three Gorges Water Power Plant, the most ambitious and enormous manmade project in the world and meant to provide electricity supply for transnational and national companies, runs through this village all the way down to
the developed South China. A no less eyes-catching scene than the size of the grid system was the densely built nests of pied magpies on this extending grid system. It is said that in New York pied magpies also build their nests on telephone poles. However, this common feature cannot be used to justify the abnormal phenomenon. If I were a pied magpie, I would at least hope to keep the alternative to live on trees. But, trees are long gone. Their new home—a huge grid system—symbolizes China’s “glorious” achievement in industrialization. In addition to this newly built Three Gorges grid system, there are other ongoing construction projects nearby my hometown: an under-sea tunnel and above-sea bridge connecting Huangdao with Qingdao. These projects were built or are being built at the cost of the sweat and blood of some rural workers. Yinshan Xu was one of them.

Yinshan Xu was my childhood playmate. On 1 June 2006, the Children’s Day, the time when I was still in Finland, he took his nine-year-old daughter to play with my brother’s daughter, discussing how to celebrate for them the Children’s Day. The next day, he joined a construction team to set up the Three Gorges grid system, but was unfortunately crushed to death by a bulldozer. On 17 February 2007, my brother and I wanted to memorize this friend by burning ghost money before his tomb (paper made to resemble money and burned as an offering to the dead; a superstitious tradition still practiced in rural China) but received strong opposition from our parents, who said that the ghost-money-burning ceremony could only be held to honor the deceased elders instead of to memorize a friend. However, my brother and I did it. Out in the open air with an overhanging and extending grid system, the ghost money was burning on the moist earth, recalling a lost soul. At the moment, my Nokia mobile phone rang and disturbed this mourning ceremony. A friend called from Finland to wish me a happy Spring Festival. A sudden feeling arose inside me and I was put in a bizarre situation in which the melodies of agrarian society, industrial society and information society mixed together. This was also ideologically a symphony of feudalism, socialism and capitalism.

The village used to be a military base from the 1960s to the 1980s for a division of the People’s Liberation Army. In order to avoid a possible nuclear attack from Soviet Union and the United States, a whole fortified structure was built under the slogan “dig caves deeply, accumulate food widely” (shenwadong, guangjiliang). Nowadays, the caves had collapsed, and the favorite entertainment of the youngsters is not to explore those caves like Tom Sawyer but to chat and play online games in the town’s net bars. The old military base was transformed into an industrial base for the Japanese, South Korea, and US companies. While China has swung from one extreme to the other, the international hostility against it has not changed.

This reminded me of a speech given by Mr. Michael Rubin, who is PhD of Yale University and think tank for US Middle East policy, and went to Finland on 22 March 2006 to explain the US military invasion of Iraq. The most frequently mentioned wording in his speech was “the United States and its allies.” The wording is often seen in US press but this was the first time I gained sufficient degree of sensitivity. My back was stung by these words. Mr. Rubin in his speech refused to consider the Iraq war from an ethical perspective. When explaining the difficult situation of the US in Iraq, the only regret he had was that the US should have occupied Iraq during the First Gulf War. China was also often mentioned as an assumed enemy of the US and its allies. All of these led me to think that the color of Cold War has not faded but been plated in another color. Though, admittedly, this black and white mentality is losing its popularity in Europe, it is still democratically manipulated in the US as told by the most recent evidence of Iraq war. Not
coincidentally perhaps, the US *Foreign Affairs* published in its March-April 2006 issue an article written by Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, announcing the end of the era of “mutually assured destruction of nuclear weapons.” The US, according to article, has gained absolute nuclear superiority over Russia and China. Yes, this is certainly an absolute truth. So what? The tone of the speech and the article and many others helped me realize the necessity to rebuild the fortified structures in my hometown to escape from a future nuclear war.

In this way, the academic trip to Finland had availed me of a complete new understanding about what is happening in my small village. Already at least economically well connected into the world, I think two directions are essential in understanding the shifting picture of the village. One direction comes from the top to the bottom, from the upper reaches of river to the lower reaches, the other from the bottom to the top, from the lower to upper reaches. The nation-state is a coordinating force in the middle reaches. China is a country located in the lower reaches and this small village is just a small branch. In order to analyze the sample of this village, it is then needed to observe the powerful water flowing down from the upper reaches and the ability of the nation-state to coordinate this water flow, that is, to what degree is the nation-state able to resist or redirect the influences. Another direction of analysis starts from the small village and observes the obedient responses or protective struggles this village has made under such a passive situation. A better choice might be a top down one. After all, what happened in the lower reaches of the river were responsive and sometimes hopeless struggles.

When coordinating international capital, Chinese government has released the strongest ever pushing force, taking advantage of an authoritarian political regime. Chinese society is led into a quickly transforming state of flux which fails many versions of definition. A best available description of this current state might be Fei Xiaotong’s “two jumps on three levels”, arguing that China is making transitions simultaneously from an agrarian society to an industrial society and also to an information society. The unmentioned part of the story is that this grand project is designed by a combined bloc of power between foreign capital and Chinese political elites. The uniqueness in the case of China is that it has been pushing the technological/market approach to such an extreme that it is not at all less extreme than it had tried, from the 1950s to the 1970s, to avoid this approach.

So far, what are the obvious results observed in the great capitalist experiment? The above-mentioned picture of the small village only partly answers the question. A short answer to this question is that China is harvesting enormously the benefits of this market/technological and efficiency-oriented growth strategy, but at the same time suffering from some seemingly disastrous outcomes. Foremost, a quickly expanding gap between the rich and poor or between the rural and urban areas lays down the roots of all evils. Secondly, the ecological system is becoming increasingly fragile. A lower level of effects is evident in the field of media/culture, which subordinates itself to the development model. Under pressures from both politics and profit-making, Chinese media are experiencing an overlapping de-ideologization and re-ideologization process. By closely following, consciously or unconsciously, the party and market ideologies, Chinese media are transforming themselves into propagandists or entertainers, taming the Chinese people into the most indifferent citizens but the most willing consumers. Cultural movements in China typically focused on the wrong target. In 2006, some PhD students of Peking University proposed that we should resist the celebrations of foreign festivals such as Valentine’s Day and Christmas in China and promote our own cultural festivals. The sad thing is
that they did not realize the inherited connection between a cultural phenomenon and an economic one.

Towering on the top of the NWICO and WSIS debate are the disputes and confusions over a market/technological modernization mode of development offered by the early development communication scholars and later information society theorists and the social/democratic approach prescribed by the critical political economists. This division of opinion is where I started my account and analysis of the international communication. A Chinese background is useful for this account of story in the sense that China provides a good testing field to evaluate these two positions because it has a condensed history of development. My age witnessed how, within 29 years, China has reached the almost widest gap between the rich and poor from a totally egalitarian country in 1978, when I was born and Deng Xiaoping regime started his great capitalist experiment. I have also a direct understanding of the lives of Chinese people in different classes. My family background explains a bit. The occupations of my family members shows a clear picture of class division with my parents working in the barren farms of the poor countryside, my brother and sister working in the textile factories of a small town, and myself, by dancing on the thin string of education, working my way up to the position of a university teacher and then luckily getting the opportunity to escape from the energetic, chaotic, noisy construction field of China to write a licentiate’s thesis in Finland.

There is not a simple right or wrong answer on the model of development. It is only an answer about who are more right in this temporary positioning in the long river of history and based on what evidence do we come to such a conclusion. Or, “balance” is needed in these two approaches for healthy development. On the one hand, the case of China can be used to argue for the market/technological approach because of the economic achievement and improvement of people’s living standards. On the other hand, it can be used to discuss the failures and disastrous effects of such an approach. Capitalism prospered on ruined moral traditions. Without institutional guarantee, however, material progress does not seem to help to cultivate new civilization and morality. The modernity promised by the optimists does not take roots. A shocking case which emerged recently is the prevalent use of children slave labor in the brick-producing industry in the absence of surveillance from the local government. This case as well as numerous others gives testimony to the disastrous result of the combination between an undemocratic polity and an antidemocratic market. I am tilting towards a pessimistic (or positively pessimistic) view, shared, for the most part, by the political economists. Their writings on cultural imperialism thesis/NWICO and information society theories/WSIS at least demonstrate their courage to take positions and make independent judgments on what is right and wrong, regardless of success or failure.

On 26 February 2007, I traveled on a ferry from Huangdao to Qingdao. Looking back from the afterdeck, the ferry was moving backwards in a somber shadow; but looking forwards from the foredeck, the ferry was moving steadily forwards in a shower of bright sunshine. The thought that struck me at the moment was that most of the critical scholars are able to resist the temptation to sit on the foredeck where splendid views can be appreciated; most of them choose, without any reluctance, to sit on the afterdeck. They sit on the afterdeck and look backwards. The passengers on the ferry constitute only a background of their perspective. Their eyes go over the sea to look at the passengers still waiting on the dock, and then go over the shoulders of these passengers to look at the people who can not afford to come to the dock, not to mention to travel on a ferry. These scholars are only physically on board; their hearts...
are together with those who are not able to be on board.

On 15 April 2002, after the academic session, the scholars attending “International Relations and Cultural Communication” conference went sightseeing at the Temple of Heaven. Inside the Temple was a sky-heart-stone. It is said that if you keep your ear close to the stone, you would be able to hear God. Professor Thomas Jacobson of New York State University listened for a while. Then he stood up, put on a serious face expression, and told us he did not hear anything from God, but he did hear a thundering sound of commercialization. Now, I tend to think that the idea of these scholars is a fairly simple one. They wish they could hear on the sky-heart-stone some alternative sounds, in addition to the sound of commercialization.

On 6 August 2007, after receiving my Chinese PhD, I came back to Finland to finish this thesis. Now, appreciating a gorgeous window view from my office, I search my soul and look back to the contemporary Chinese history, accumulated from three thousands of years of feudal cycles of prosperity/decaying and distorted by nearly one hundred years of anti-colonization struggles, eight years of anti-Japanese invasion war, three years of civil war, and the following twists and turns of various extremes of ideological pursuits, I have a sense of powerlessness. The contemporary Chinese history from 1949 onwards, consisting of both its communist experiment and capitalist experiment, has openly denied its own tradition ranging from respect of ancestors to nature-human harmony.

Under a force field of strong emotional pressures and faced with an academic discourse dominated by Western terminology, it is difficult to sort out academically and scientifically an entangling historical thread. In this sense, people from so-called Third World countries do tend to become emotional. Perhaps there is no need for Edward Said to argue against it. Yet, the motivation is high. I have to kill my curiosity before I am killed by the curiosity. It is a race against time. A most practical way of achieving this may be an honest recording, in a step-by-step and grain-by-grain method, of what happened academically and politically, and put these observations into perspective, before seeking any academic innovation. An attempt to adopt a Chinese perspective of interpretation of communication was made at the last chapter of the thesis.

My thanks go to every name mentioned above. Perhaps they did not anticipate what they intentionally or unintentionally said or did have the magic to touch the soul of a student. My Thanks particularly go to my Finnish Supervisor Professor Kaarle Nordenstreng who opened the door and pointed the way. There are some friends who have made and are making my stay in Finland colorful: Iiris Ruoho, Svetlana Pasti, Auli Harju, Laura Ruusunoksa, Pauliina Lehtonen, Paula Attila, Pekka Peltola, Juhani Karila, Petri Vanhanen, Gu Guanyi, and Liu Ning.

Tampere, 31 January 2008

Peixi Xu
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. From NWICO to WSIS

Adopting a historical perspective, the thesis intends to review and analyze the process from a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO, 1976-1984) to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2003-2005). The most defining background of NWICO was a solid mentality of Cold War symbolized primarily by Winston Churchill’s “The Sinews of Peace” address on 5 March 1946 which referred to the political, military and ideological division in Europe as a descended iron curtain and alternatively by Mr. X’s article “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” published in *Foreign Affairs* in July 1947 which continued to regard the Soviet Union as a rival. Another less defining but more closely-related background of NWICO was the anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America which led to the independence of nearly 50 countries in the 1960s alone. In order not to become involved in the Cold War division, most of these countries loosely allied together into the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The size of the NAM grew from 25 countries attending the 1st summit in September 1961 to 76 countries attending the 4th summit in September 1973, when a framework of a new international economic order was outlined in efforts to restructure world trade and improve the bargaining power of developing countries. Also recognized were that “the activities of imperialism are not confined solely to the political and economic fields, but also cover cultural and social fields,” and accordingly the summit called for “concerted action in the fields of mass communication” (Nordenstreng, 1986: 15). An academic notion of cultural imperialism, developed by some critical communication scholars, was soon picked up by the NAM to defend their cultural sovereignty.

In March 1976, the call for a New International Information order was made at the Non-Aligned Symposium of Information in Tunis and found inroads at UNESCO’s 19th session of the General Conference held the same year in Nairobi, which adopted a Tunisian resolution and invited the Director General to pay attention to the recommendations put forward by the NAM in various conferences. As noted by Kleinwachter (1993: 13-14), their appeals can be broken down into three main problems: the big gap in the worldwide distribution of the means of communication, the imbalance in the worldwide information flow, and the one-sided and distorted coverage of the developing world by the dominating Western mass media.

Despite the reluctance of the US-led Western countries to face these appeals, they entered into dialogue about the information issues with the South and adopted in general a stick and carrot policy in the late 1970s. The wind shifted when the Reagan and Thatcher Administration came in power in early 1980s. The conservative forces represented by these regimes preferred a unilateral foreign policy, of which UNESCO was the first victim. They withdrew from UNESCO in 1984, scapegoating the NWICO movement, which was depicted by these polities and their media as a threat to press freedom. Because the dialogue on NWICO occurred mainly among national political representatives, the withdrawal of US and UK symbolized an announcement of its failure.

NWICO movement had left three important legacies: the Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO, the MacBride Report and an International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC). The legal significance of the Mass Media Declaration, as
diagnosed by Hamelink according to three criteria – whether it is adopted unanimously, worded in strong obligatory fashion, and referred to in later debates as important and binding – is “very poor” (Hamelink, 1997: 73). IPDC re-prescribed a narrow technological problem-solving approach which did not succeed in the past, not to mention the fact that the project frequently suffered from an insufficiency of funding.

The MacBride Report, however, in spite of an intentional ambiguity in wording, becomes a milestone in international communication due to its stock-taking feature of the then social-economic forces (Nordenstreng, 2005a). At the core of the contributions of the MacBride Report is its promotion of democratization of communication and definition of the Right to Communicate as a basic human right (MacBride et al, 1980: 265). After the fall of the NWICO movement, some critical communication scholars went on to enrich and uphold the Right to Communicate. From 1989 to 1999, scholars, professional journalistic organization and other civil society groups met annually in efforts to democratize communication.

Meanwhile, international communication scholars moved onto civil activism. George Gerbner of the US initiated Cultural Environment Movement; Cees Hamelink of the Netherlands drafted People’s Communication Charter; Kaarle Nordenstreng of Finland commenced International Media Monitoring Project (Nordenstreng, 1999a: 5-6). In 1996, these scholars, as well as some civil society forces committed to a similar goal, were united under a civil society umbrella – Platform for Democratic Communication, whose active participation in WSIS produced fruitful results. The concept of the Right to Communicate was written into The Civil Society Declaration at the Geneva phase of WSIS. This constitutes an essential link between NWICO movement and WSIS.

The two phases of WSIS were held in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in November 2005. The debates centered on how to build an information society. One of the most hotly debated issues was internet governance. The management of the core resources such as root server, domain names and IP addresses of the Internet is monopolized by an American organization ICANN, set up in 1998. This monopoly was challenged at the two phases of WSIS. The first summit saw participation of 175 governments, 481 civil society groups and 98 companies. On this summit, China, Brazil, India and South Africa challenged the US with a plan to bring Internet governance under the umbrella of an inter-governmental UN organization such as the ITU (Kleinwachter, 2006).

The second summit witnessed the participation of 174 governments, 606 civil society groups and 226 companies. The New Cooperation Model on Internet governance proposed by European Union triggered heavy confrontation in Tunis. The New Cooperation Model would let the governments lay down essential principles of Internet governance but the commercial companies manage the core resources. With such a proposal, EU had intended to find a compromise between China which favored a government leadership in Internet governance and the US which favored a market leadership. However, there was a high probability that China and the US had made a secret deal before the Tunis phase – China would hold back its challenge on ICANN; in return, the US would pay due respect to the sovereignty principle of Internet governance. (ibid)

The outcomes of WSIS allowed everybody to claim victory: the status quo of Internet governance was kept, the sovereignty principle was respected, and an Internet
Governance Forum was established to further explore issues regarding Internet governance. A striking feature of WSIS was a close involvement of the civil society groups, which dropped an initial plan for public protests and decided on a dialogue strategy. The WSIS issued several important declarations which can be categorized into official outcomes and nonofficial ones, the former consisted of Declaration of Principles, Plan of Action, Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, and Tunis Commitment; the latter consisted of Civil Society Declaration and Civil Society Statement. Employing a lexical content analysis method, Claudia Padovani compared respectively the Geneva official documents and nonofficial document with the MacBride Report, concluding that the nonofficial document inherited the MacBride Report more completely (Padovani, 2005).

The account of WSIS can be told through four threads. A chronological thread would focus on 2003 and 2005. A topical thread would focus on various topics debated such as internet governance and intellectual property rights. A spatial thread would divide the participants into four forces according to the four different types of globalization identified by Tehranian: globalization according to Davos, Seattle, Beijing and Tehran (Tehranian, 2005: vii-xi). Another frequently employed thread would treat the participants as three kinds of stakeholders: governments, market and civil society. All of these four threads are employed in my writing in order to gain a clear picture of WSIS, but I would argue that the spatial thread sheds more insights into the political debate at WSIS.

1.2. The Task of This Study

NWICO and WSIS constitute the subject of this thesis. They are international communication regulation events and frames of reference for international communication research. A central aspect of these events is the question about how development can be achieved with the help of communication media, seeking cures for the imbalance of international news flow and global digital divide. Behind the question are the conflicts between two models of development: modernization and dependency. The modernization paradigm assumes that the development can be achieved by a transplant of Western systems and technology. The proponents of this model include some UN agencies, the World Bank, translational companies, and the majority of the public in the West (Servaes, 1999: 7). The dependency paradigm questions the validity of the modernization paradigm by calling into question some deeply-rooted structural mechanisms which tend to favor the West.

The history from NWICO to WSIS witnessed development paradigm changes from modernization to dependency and back to modernization (though in the guise of globalization). In terms of media and communication, the free flow of information doctrine took a round trip during NWICO debate, which promoted a free and balanced flow of information, and landed untouched at WSIS, if not firmer than it had been before NWICO. The advanced technology transfer helped primarily to expand transnational business and little to meet the basic needs of the people. It is on this basis that these questions were asked. Did WSIS achieve anything at all (Hamelink, 2004)? Will the real WSIS please stand up (O’Siochru, 2004)? Twenty years mean nothing (Mastrini and Charras, 2005)?

NWICO and WSIS are watersheds of international communication research, which has always been closely related to international politics. Corresponding to changes in development paradigms, the academic paradigm shifts in international communication research came in three phases: a first phase concerned with development
communication, reaching climax in the 1960s; a second phase concerned with cultural imperialism, dominating debate in the 1970s and 1980s; and a third phase after 1990s, with globalization at the center of the debate (Golding and Morris, 1997: 4; Sparks, 2001: 357-84). These classifications were made on a time frame of every 20 years. Nordenstreng offered a more detailed classification based on a time frame of every 10 years, coinciding with the history of leftist thinking (Nordenstreng, 2004: 5-18). NWICO and WSIS are two important frames of reference for this history of international communication research.

The thesis reviews the academic and political process regarding NWICO and WSIS. Chapter 1 introduces the research subjects and composition of the thesis. Chapter 2 and 3 respectively introduce the dominant academic paradigm and political process of NWICO. The cultural imperialism thesis, heavily debated among such communication scholars as political economists, cultural studies scholars and administrative researchers, is the dominant academic paradigm for NWICO. The justification of this thesis equals the justification of the resistance against Western cultural products and also the moral support for the NWICO movement. Chapter 4 and 5 respectively introduce the dominant academic paradigm and political process of WSIS. The information society theory is the dominant academic paradigm for WSIS. What are the roles of information and communication technologies in the so-called information society, drivers or servants? Which is the major enemy to the freedom of expression in information society, government or market? Which is a better definition for the concept of digital divide, access to internet or how to use the internet? These are the topics debated both academically among information society theorists and politically among WSIS participants.

The history from NWICO to WSIS provides a sound sample for the understanding international communication regulation and research. Chapter 6 puts everything together and comes to several conclusions regarding this historical process. It has to be noted that these academic and political debates are more overlapping with than independent of each other. Putting them in separate chapters for analysis does not mean they are separate in reality. I have managed to make up for this weakness by setting aside room in some chapters to discuss the political/academic linkage. Without centering on either of the two processes, the thesis attempts to identify the dynamics between and within each of them. The message carried in this process throws lights into the history of international communication, illuminating a road not only moving back to the past but also leading to the future. This concluding chapter also attempts to interpret the concept of the Right to Communicate. It is under the umbrella of this concept that, after the political failure of the NWICO movement, some civil society forces got together and continued their efforts on democratizing international communication. I use this concept to bind NWICO and WSIS. I argue, combined with a Chinese cultural perspective, that the notion of Communication Rights lost the dynamic nature of communication contained in the notion of the Right to Communicate.
Chapter 2 Cultural Imperialism Thesis

2.1. Is There a Cultural Imperialism Thesis?

The story of *the Blind Men and the Elephant* is meant to convey the relationship between the parts and the whole. After the six blind men touched the elephant and gave their descriptions about what it looked like, the owner of the elephant answered that each of them was both right and wrong, and if they worked together by adding up their descriptions, they could find the wisdom. Tomlinson should have used this fable to explain the complex nature of cultural imperialism and the intense debate on it; however, he used it reversely to argue that, unlike the logic of the story which at least assumes the elephant as a “coherent reality” (Tomlinson, 1991: 8), the academic literature of cultural imperialism does not have such a reality. The term that has fallen victim to his analysis is “thesis”, as he quoted from Tunstall:

> The cultural imperialism thesis claims that authentic, traditional and local culture in many parts of the world is being battered out of existence by the indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products, mainly from the United States. (Tunstall, 1977: 57)

Tomlinson argues that the term thesis used here implies that cultural imperialism is “a coherent body of ideas shared by a group of theoretically specifiable speakers” (Tomlinson, 1991: 8) when actually there isn’t such coherence. In a word, Tomlinson believes that there are only various versions of cultural imperialism but not a thesis. Thus, Tomlinson prefers Foucault’s term “discourse” instead of thesis to unite different articulations of cultural imperialism.

Tomlinson’s preference of discourse is fully understandable since the term, having been empowered by Foucault, sheds new insights into the intense academic and political debate in the 1970s and 1980s. However, to embrace a new concept does not necessarily mean that we should dissolve and sacrifice the advantages of an old one. The methodology Tomlinson used is indeed helpful to improve our awareness of the delicacies of the concept; however, it meanwhile exaggerates these delicacies. After all, Tomlinson’s deconstruction of cultural imperialism is more or less based on a categorization of the concept’s various speakers who may be fundamentally different from each other due to their differences in academic or political position, for stance, being a Marxist critic, a liberal critic, or a national representative in UNESCO (Tomlinson, 1991: 9).

Having these different speakers, however, does not invalidate a cultural imperialism thesis the way Tomlinson claimed. This Chapter argues that there is a cultural imperialism thesis, and a rather coherent one in a fairly clear form of an elephant, in spite of the fact that it is theoretically ill-defined and politically much-abused. Specifically, it argues that if we are able to make distinctions and draw boundaries among these voices while keeping in mind the fact that they are in reality highly interactive and even mutually dependent, then chances are good that we can locate a cultural imperialism thesis and discuss it in a concrete context, academic or political.

This Chapter is intended for a chronology and analysis of the cultural imperialism thesis. Broadly speaking, it employs a family tree method to engage various academic participants in the cultural imperialism debate, and specifically, it focuses its attention on several keywords -- dependency, domination, and sovereignty -- growing out from the works of several early theorists. It begins with a brief introduction of different schools of thoughts in the field of communication studies. Then it moves on to
describe a tug-of-war on cultural imperialism between political economists, cultural studies scholars, and administrative researchers. Finally, the Chapter summarizes the major points in question and analyzes the concept of cultural regulation to relate this academic debate to the political one in UNESCO; in this way, the political implication of cultural imperialism is made evident.

2.2. The Rise of Critical Communication Research

The earliest classification of communication studies is seen in Lazarsfeld’s *Administrative and Critical Communication Research*, in which, as the title indicates, communication research was classified into two types: administrative and critical. While the former is “carried through in the service of some kind of administrative agency of public or private character”; the latter is “posed against the practice of administrative research, requiring that, prior and in addition to whatever special purpose to be served, the general role of our media of communication in the present social system should be studied” (Lazarsfeld, 1941: 169). The differences between these two types research were later interpreted in terms of (a) the types of problems selected, the former asking how an organization can do what it is doing more effectively, the latter questioning whether the organization should be doing this at all; (b) the research methods employed, the former being neopositivist, behaviorist, and individualist, the latter historical, materialist; and (c) treatment of results, the former ensuring they do not disturb the status quo, the latter inviting radical change (cf. Babe, 1993: 16). In the decade when Lazarsfeld presented his definition, modern communication research was still unformed.

The next decade, the 1950s, was defined as the formative stage of modern communication research, when the field established itself in the academia and in the media industry throughout both Europe and North America (Nordenstreng, 2004: 6). Administrative research was the dominant approach in this new field at the time, but critical voice was not totally absent. For instance, Smythe, the founding father of critical communication research, wrote an article in 1954, strongly criticizing the “logical positivist scientific theoretical” approach as represented by Klapper and promoted an “institutional, historical theoretical approach” (cf. Wasko, 1993: 4). If administrative research and critical research were to be regarded as two independent families, then this is one of the earliest cross-family quarrels. Another quarrel in this decade, an inside-family one in its nature judged by its roots in administrative research scholars, was on the demise of communication research between Berelson and Schramm, and it initiated a crisis-like mood in the field. The cause of the crisis, as Nordenstreng commented about one decade later in an article challenging the prevailing paradigm in a similar way as Smythe did, can be attributed to the lack of critical thinking (Nordenstreng, 1968).

A turbulent 1960s was characterized by Vietnam War, race relations, campus unrest in the United States, and the shift of international geopolitics driven by decolonization. These turbulences had partly contributed to the rise of critical thinking in this decade and the decades following. One year after Nordenstreng’s criticism in 1968, Schiller further redressed the grave imbalance in the literature of communication research in his book, *Mass Communication and American Empire*, which for the first time comprehensively and critically examined the American mass communication structure and policy in relation to their economic and political functions (Smythe, 1969: viii). Schiller suggested in the book the relationship between free trade and free flow of information:
If free trade is the mechanism by which a powerful economy penetrates and dominates a weaker one, the “free flow of information”, the designated objective incidentally of UNESCO, is the channel through which life styles and value systems can be imposed on poor and vulnerable societies. If the perils that unrestricted trade pose to developing nations are now fairly widely recognized, the significance of communications flow as elements in international control are only barely beginning to be appreciated, even in the United States itself. (Schiller, 1969: 8-9)

Schiller went on to suggest that “perhaps a special sophistication is required to comprehend the material benefits that accrue to the transmitter nation from the intangible messages and information it processes for weaker, receiver societies” (ibid, p. 9). This need for a special sophistication was partly fulfilled in Schiller’s book, and was later taken into a sharper focus in 1977 by Dallas Smythe, who, in his recognition of the blind spot of Western Marxism, drew people’s attention to the economic function of mass media in capitalism, and argued through his audience commodity thesis that the most important commodity produced by the media is the audience. It is in this decade, nearly three decades after Lazarsfeld’s parsimonious classification, that the critical approach towards communication is established (Nordenstreng, 2004a: 7).

Three important concepts relating cultural imperialism gained their hardened positioning in communication research: dependency, domination, and sovereignty.

2.3. Key Concepts of Cultural Imperialism by Early Theorists

**Dependency**
Development primarily means to satisfy the basic needs of the people and to achieve self-reliant growth. From the World War II up to the 1970s, scholars had identified two paradigms of development: the modernization paradigm and the dependency paradigm. Scholars holding the modernization perspective, as represented by Lerner, Rogers, and Schramm, believe that the developing countries can follow the experience of the developed countries to realize their transition from traditional to modern countries. Liberating their markets, democratizing their polity, and transferring foreign technologies are the solutions prescribed by them. Scholars holding the dependency perspective, as represented by Galtung and Smythe, believe the dependent position of the developing countries result mainly from the material and cultural penetration of the latter; thus, the prescriptions offered by modernization-minded scholars will only lead to a deepening dependent position. The frustrations the modernization paradigm met in the Third World countries gave rise to the dependency concept.

**Domination**
In Schiller’s *Communication and Cultural Domination*, domination can be best described as a process of control exercised by the power centers over the peripheries. This concept is central to his widely-quoted concept of cultural imperialism:

> …the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system. (Schiller, 1976: 9)

According to Schiller, the dominant and the dominated relationship apply most appropriately between the First and the Third World countries, and the Second World countries are to some degree immune to this domination. Complicated evidence was found later, both opposing and confirming this varied degree of dominating
relationship. On the one hand, some earlier theorists showed the grave imbalance of information flow between First and Third World countries. On the other hand, some other scholars showed that cultural-linguistic background played an increasingly significant role in influencing the international flow of information.

**Sovereignty**

Dependency and domination mark a clear directional relationship between the senders and receivers. The concept of sovereignty implies a protective and responsive strategy for the weak countries to protect themselves from being culturally dependent on or dominated by foreign countries. In their co-edited reader on *National Sovereignty and International Communication* published in 1979, Nordenstreng and Schiller introduced this theoretical framework into international communication. The two editors observed that the concept of national sovereignty, like domination and dependency, has become an integral part of the NWICO debate, which aimed at the decolonization of information conditions in the developing countries and in general advocating respect for the cultural and political sovereignty of all nations. The editors also notified that the book is not a theoretically unified study but only a collection of relevant ideas for further analysis and deeper understanding. This point was rephrased by Lee, when he wrote that “this volume…can be read as an indictment of the free flow information which has long been taken for granted…..(but) it must be noted that the editors do not promise to offer a comprehensive theory, or even an advanced framework for the construction of one” (Lee, 1982: 618); and by Kleinwachter, when he commented that “the reader offered a unique combination of progressive and conservative thinkers, providing a stimulating overview about the diversity of ideas concerning a basic principle under international law and encouraging thinking about an undefined concept” (Kleinwachter, 1995: 248).

**The Studies on the flow of information**

Whoever the researchers are, administrative research scholars or critical communication scholars, all the results of the studies on the flow of information come to a shared conclusion that there exists a considerable imbalance in the flow information. Similar in this conclusion though, the literature on flow or pipeline studies is ironically divided by two obviously differing perspectives: pro-free-flow vs. pro-free-and-balanced-flow, or less accurately but more ideologically, pro-Western vs. anti-Western. Among all the studies that can be categorized into an anti-Western perspective, Nordenstreng and Varis’s study on the international flow of television programs is a classical example.

The study was initiated in 1971 in Finland and later received financial support form UNESCO. It included in the final report data gathered from nearly 50 countries with varied degree of reliability and success. Nordenstreng and Varis concluded in the study that the international flow of television programs is a one-way traffic, mainly from industrially developed world to the developing countries. They summarized the findings by analyzing the two stages of the flow of television programs between nations: production and distribution, and stations as users of foreign material. In the production and distribution, they found that “the United States has led markets in the mid sixties by exporting more than twice as many programs as all other countries combined” and that “other major originators of television programs for international distribution are the UK, France and the Federal Republic of Germany.” In the television stations’ use of foreign material, they found that “most non-socialist countries of the world purchase programs from the United States and, to a lesser extent, from the United Kingdom.” The study also observed that “program imports are heavily concentrated on serials and series, long-feature films, and entertainment
In a symposium devoted to a discussion of the results of the study and sponsored by UNESCO and participated by scholars such as Dallas Smythe, Herbert Schiller, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Elihu Katz, Peter Golding and Thomas Guback, it was recommended that “efforts should be made to redress the imbalance of resources which presently characterizes the international flow and direction of information among nations, especially in areas unable to determine their own cultural destiny, whether as nations or within nations” (ibid, p.11-19, 102). It has to be noted that, as early as in 1973, these scholars are against the imbalanced flow of information both nationally and internationally. Considering this fact, the attempts made by some opponents to the cultural imperialism thesis to justify the international imbalance of information flow with the evidence of a national imbalance were misleading at the very starting point of analysis.

Varis carried out a follow-up study one decade later in order to “put into practice lessons learned from the first investigation, and to see what changes, if any, had occurred over the intervening period”. Before introducing the data and methodology of this new study, Varis summarized the main findings of the first study with two indisputable trends: a one-way traffic from the big exporting countries to the rest of the world, and the dominance of entertainment material in the flow. The new study was based on the data gathered from 56 countries. Varis concluded in his general findings that “in comparison of the 1973 figures, the present situation seems to repeat the earlier pattern”, and that “no clear changes in the main structure and in the volume of foreign programs have taken place”. In spite of this, Varis also noticed a notable increase in regional exchanges particularly in the Arab States and Latin America, which “have added an important dimension to the television flow map.” (Varis, 1985: 5-17)

These flow studies provided empirical evidence to the concepts such as dependency, domination, and sovereignty. Together with those concepts, they have invited criticism from various sides, which mainly fall into three categories: cultural studies scholars, administrative research scholars, and political economists.

### 2.4. The Early Theorists Were Challenged

**Cultural studies scholars**

Cultural studies scholars, as represented by Ang, Liebes, Katz and Fiske and Sinclair, challenged cultural imperialism theorists by setting up two perspectives: multi-centrism and active audience perspective. They also take an overall critical approach but run into heavy confrontations with the original camp of critical thinkers.

In *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic imagination*, Ien Ang carried out in 1982 her research on an American dramatic serial *Dallas*. She placed in a Dutch women’s magazine an advertisement, in which she claimed that she likes “watching the TV serial Dallas but often get odd reactions to it” and invited readers to write and tell her why they like watching too or dislike it. Based on the forty-two replies to the advertisement, she concluded that “a stubborn fixation on the threat of ‘American cultural imperialism’ can lead one to lose sight of the fact that since the 1950s the mass consumption of American popular culture has been integrated to a greater or lesser degree into the national ‘cultural identity’ itself, especially in Western Europe…” Ang went on to suggest that the disturbing susceptibility to American media products
may only exist in the ivory towers of the policy makers and other guardians of the national culture. “In the millions of living rooms where TV set is switched on to Dallas, the issue is rather one of pleasure.” (Ang, 1985)

Another study on Dallas was carried out in the late 1980s by Liebes and Katz in Israel. Following Ang’s questioning of cultural imperialism, the researchers made it clear the aim of their research in The Export of Meaning: Cross-cultural readings of Dallas. The beginning of the preface claims that “theorists of cultural imperialism assume that hegemony is prepackaged in Los Angeles, shipped out to the global village, and unwrapped in innocent minds” and “we wanted to see for ourselves”. The researchers chose four widely different groups within Israeli society, which consist of the Russian immigrants to Israel, the Arab citizens of Israel, Moroccan Jews of long standing in the country, and kibbutz members who are mostly Israeli-born. They compared these four groups “with each other, with second-generation Americans in Los Angeles (as representatives of the audience for whom the original program was intended), and with Japanese in Japan (where the program failed).” Liebes and Katz “assumed and hoped to verify that viewing a program like Dallas is, indeed, an active and involving experience.” More importantly, they “hoped to be able to demonstrate that the nature of involvement varies with the cultural background one brings to the viewing.” (Liebes and Katz, 1993)

They finally found the differences in the various groups’ interpretation of Dallas. This is evident in the way different groups retell an episode of Dallas. The researchers predefined three types of retelling, linear, segmented, and thematic, which, they believed, invoke sociological, psychological, and ideological perspectives. It turned out that the two more traditional groups – Arabs and Moroccan Jews – prefer linearity, and they emphasize the characters’ family roles. The Russian immigrants are sensitive to the outer sources of potential ideological control, a characteristic regarded by the researchers deriving from their tradition of literary criticism. “Americans and kibbutzniks are not concerned with the linearity of the narrative but with analyzing the problems of characters interpersonally.” Drawing upon these differences in interpretations, Liebes and Katz questioned the validation of cultural imperialism. (ibid)

John Fiske aligned himself with Katz and Liebes’ conclusion that consuming the program did not necessarily involve consuming the ideology. When explaining viewers’ enjoyment of television, Fiske argued that “their pleasure in television is not explained by the ease with which they can accommodate themselves to its ideologically produced meanings and subject positions.” Rather, he wrote that “A better explanation of the pleasures of television lies in understanding it as a text of contestation which contains forces of closure and of openness and which allows viewers to make meanings that are subculturally pertinent to them, but which are made in resistance to the forces of closure in the text, just as their subcultural identity is maintained in resistance to the ideological forces of homogenization.” (Fiske, 1987)

In opposition to the earliest theorists of cultural imperialism, Fiske drew a line between financial economy and cultural economy, saying that the latter differs from the former in that its commodities, called texts, are provokers of meaning and pleasure and the consumer is responsible for the production of meaning and pleasure. The producers and distributors do attempt to make meanings and pleasures but they have an enormous rate of failure. That is exemplified, as Fiske argued, in the fact that “twelve out of thirteen records fail to make a profit, TV series are axed by the dozen, expensive films sink rapidly into red figures.” Overall, Fiske differentiated cultural
Thompson also echoed with Liebes and Katz in their suspicion. He found two problems with Schiller’s argument concerning the ways the imported media products affect their recipients in the Third World countries and elsewhere. The first problem, he argued, is that Schiller has “placed too much emphasis on the role of consumerist values and has neglected the enormous diversity of themes, images and representations which characterize the output of the media industries.” Thompson described the second weakness in Schiller’s argument as “fallacy of internalism”, which “refers to a tendency to try to ‘read off’ the impact of capitalist-dominated media systems at the level of individual cultural experience from an analysis of the structures themselves, without paying attention to the complexities of cultural reception.” Thompson believed that his notion of fallacy of internalism “presses to the heart of the cultural imperialism thesis”. Thompson specifically cited the study done by Liebes and Katz, and regarded that “studies such as this have shown convincingly that the reception and appropriation of media products are complex social processes in which individuals – interacting with others as well as with the characters portrayed in the program they receive – actively make sense of messages, adopt various attitudes towards them and use them in differing ways in the course of their day-to-day lives.” (Thompson, 1995)

Ang, Liebes and Katz, Thompson, Fiske’s arguments were made mainly from an audience analysis perspective, promoting the active role of the audience in interpreting media messages. Sinclair, on the other hand, focused his attention on “the decentering of cultural imperialism.” He referred the rise of some non-Anglophone centers of international media production and trade, such as “Bombay for the Hindi film industry, Hong Kong for Chinese genre movies, Cairo for Arabic film and television, and Mexico for film and television production in Spanish”, as “cultural imperialism’s blindspot.” In this way, he struck a geolinguistic wedge into the cultural imperialism thesis. (Sinclair, 2000) While mapping out a whole picture of world television, Joseph Straubhaar also tilted towards the argument put forward by the cultural studies scholars. He not only generated new data showing that “of 25 countries or cultural markets studies in 1962, only 5 imported more than half of their broadcast television from the United States,” but also confirmed the importance of cultural-linguistic factor in refuting the cultural imperialism thesis by observing from the data analyzed that “the United States exports most to members of its cultural-linguistic sphere.” (Straubhaar, 2007)

Administrative research scholars
The harshest criticism was from the camp of administrative scholars represented by Lerner, who published a short book review of National Sovereignty and International Communication, in which Nordenstreng and Schiller are called “two intellectually agile spokesmen for the New Left on communication policy” and are accused of supporting the Soviet-led campaign against the United States with their “slogan” of national sovereignty, and of contributing nothing, theoretically or methodologically, to communication research:

It is difficult to assess the influence of the New Left on communication studies. It contributed nothing to research; where it bothered at all with data, these were collected by
conventional methods never going beyond rudimentary content analysis. It contributed nothing to theory; New Left efforts made in other fields, such as Marcues’s revisions of Marx and Freud, did not infiltrate the cadres working on the communication front. (Lerner, 1980: 137)

Lerner’s attack took an ideological line; four years later Rogers and Schement attempted to attack Nordenstreng and Varis’s 1972-73 study on the international flow of television programs by presenting new empirical evidence. The cover of a 1984 issue of Communication Research reads “This issue is devoted to media flows in Latin America”. The issue included six empirical studies of media flows in Latin America though it mainly dealt with Brazil and Mexico. Its two editors, Rogers and Schement, announced in the introduction of the issue that “a major change toward a more balanced flow has been occurring in one media industry (television) in one major region (Latin America)” (Rogers and Schement, 1984: 160). Rogers and Schement compared the two television systems in Latin America, Televisa in Mexico and TV Globo in Brazil, to the three US commercial networks, and argued for the appearance of an interdependent media relationship rather than a dependent one.

They also distinguished their studies on the international flow of television programs from the past studies particularly as represented by Nordenstreng and Varis’s 1972-73 study. Much of the past writing about mass media flows, they commented, has been “highly policy-relevant”, “of a polemic nature”, “selecting facts mainly to support one position or another”, and “aimed at political persuasion rather than scientific testing of hypotheses” (ibid, p. 161). While accusing the past studies non-theoretical and non-empirical, they believed that their studies are empirical and bear on “appropriate theoretical questions or hypotheses” (ibid). The editors also made clear their view about critical communication research. “We feel that critical is a point of view, but not a methodology”, they wrote at the conclusion of the issue (ibid, p. 311).

Political economists
The critical voices originating from these scholars offered constructive suggestions for improvement of the ideas of the early theorists of cultural imperialism. Although Schiller mentioned the double-faced role of the national elite in his definition of cultural imperialism, much criticism from the same camp of political economists or similarly-minded scholars arose from this point. Sussman provided example on how some Third World countries took advantage of the NWICO debate (supported by the cultural imperialism thesis) to their own ends. As Sussman observed, “Peru nationalized all newspapers to limit access by foreign correspondents, and a 1984 Non-Aligned Ministers Conference in Jakarta was addressed by President Suharto who called for stronger state control of news media to reverse domination by Western news agencies” (cf. Galtung and Vincent, 1992: 95). Considering the connection between the concepts such as information sovereignty and the eventual consequences of the political debate on NWICO, Kleinwachter commented that “such concepts help totalitarian regimes to justify restrictions against fundamental rights and freedoms in the field of information and communication, more than it aids small countries in protecting their legitimate interests against foreign domination” (Kleinwachter, 1995: 254).

In 1990, a whole issue of Media, Culture & Society, edited by Sparks and Roach, was devoted to a farewell to NWICO. The editors addressed and traced back the concept of imperialism in their editorial. They clarified this concept, which was in the heart of NWICO debate, in four points.
In the first place, the classical theory of imperialism was a theory of “imperialist rivalry”….some of the advocates of the ‘media imperialism’ school of thinking have laid themselves open to criticism by neglecting this element of the theory….Secondly, the major site and stake of the conflict between imperialist powers is not located externally to them in the less powerful and developed nations that are directly dominated by imperialism….Thirdly, the essence of imperialism lies not in some particular political or economic form but in the overall dynamic of capitalism as a world system….Fourthly, imperialism is not simply an external force laid over the existing social relations of either a metropolitan or developing country…. (Sparks and Roach, 1990: 276-8)

Roach, who once worked during the years of the debate on NWICO and later has become one of the key scholars writing on this aspect, summarized in this issue of journal and later in an article in honor of Dallas Smythe one of the most fatal weaknesses found in the work of the early theorists: class analysis and national elites. Roach argued that the early theorists did not have a clear class framework in their mind when promoting cultural imperialism and attending NWICO movement, otherwise “some of the contradictions of the new order would not have taken such a heavy toll” (Roach, 1993: 289).

2.5. The Response of the Early Theorists to the Challenges

Schiller’s response to the critics is condensed in his article “Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era,” and the reasons for writing such an article to reassess the original thesis of cultural imperialism are due to “the persistent explanatory and semantic efforts in recent years to minimize or discredit the idea of cultural domination” as represented by Ang and Liebes and Katz, and to the changes in the international geopolitics. Schiller recognized that American national power at the beginning of the 1990s was no longer an exclusive determinant of cultural domination, and the existing domination now can be better understood as transnational corporate cultural domination, represented by various major players in the international market such as “Philips of the Netherlands, Lever Brothers of Britain, Daimler-Benz of Germany, Samson of Korea, and Sony of Japan.” (Schiller, 1991)

Specifically in regard to the changes in the media relationship having taken place between US and Latin America, as pointed out by Rogers and Schement in the 1980s, Schiller quoted Oliveria’s reading of the same evidence on the case of Brazil. Oliveria argued in his Brazilian Soaps Outshine Hollywood: Is Cultural Imperialism Fading Out? that, despite the wide exports of Brazilian soaps, the overwhelming majority of these programs share the same purpose with their US counterparts – to sell products which are made by the same transnational corporations who advertise in Brazil as well as in the Untied States. The sponsors, he pinpointed, are Coca-Cola, Volkswagen, General Motors, etc. Most of Brazilian soaps take a Brazilianized face which is the reappearance of the American lifestyle in the Hollywood productions. “Glamorous as they are – even outshining Hollywood, their role within Brazilian society isn’t different from that of US imports.” “Unfortunately,” Oliveira concluded, “the refinements applied to the genre were not to enhance diversity, but domination.” “Domination,” Schiller commented on Oliveira’s observation, “is precisely what cultural imperialism is all about.” (ibid)

In this way and based on the new changes in the landscape of global political economy, Schiller redefined the concept of cultural domination as transnational corporation cultural domination, and this can be interpreted as his counterargument against multi-centrism. Schiller defined another concept “the total cultural package”
to contradict the active audience perspective. Schiller observed that when cultural studies scholars attacking cultural imperialism, they get very close to the administrative scholars: “Active-audience theorizing has been largely preoccupied with the analysis of individual cultural products – a program or a TV series, a movie, or a genre of fiction. The theory follows closely in the tradition of “effects” research, though not necessarily coming to the same conclusions.” Schiller went on to point out that it is impossible to “extract one TV show, film, book, or even a group, from the now nearly seamless media-cultural environment”, and examine it or them for specific effects. More specifically, he asked:

In this totalizing cultural space, who is able to specify the individual source of an idea, value, perspective, or reaction? A person’s response, for example, to the TV series *Dallas* may be the outcome of half-forgotten images from a dozen peripheral encounters in the cultural supermarket. Who is to say what are the specific sites from which individual behavior and emotions now derive? (Schiller, 1991: 307)

*Beyond National Sovereignty: International Communication in the 1990s* is a successor work of the 1973 *National Sovereignty and International Communication*. The same two editors, Nordenstreng and Schiller, wrote in preface that the concept of national sovereignty can now serve as a departure point and a continuing, though problematic, theme. In his article, Nordenstreng pointed out the paradoxical nature of the concept of national sovereignty, existing both in geopolitical, technological changes and in its social and political role:

On the one hand, with the new nations—following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia – sovereignty seems to be an ever more valid factor in the contemporary world. On the other hand, with the economic and cultural integration – promoted by new communication technologies – sovereignty seems to be a less and less significant factor. Moreover, there is a paradox concerning the social and political role of sovereignty: It serves both as a shield protecting people’s authentic interests against foreign domination and as an instrument of people’s repression by national elites. (Nordenstreng, 1993: 461)

“It is only recently”, Nordenstreng noted, “that national sovereignty has been widely seen as such a paradox; as late as the 1970s it was still taken more or less for granted.” In spite of all the predictions on the decline and end of sovereignty, Nordenstreng believed that the concept “remains a vital issue in the real world as well as in scholarship about the world”. He therefore concluded that “the concept is under revision but not under extinction.” (ibid)

In the epilogue to *Media and Globalization: Why the State Matters*, Nordenstreng took both a longitudinal and horizontal approach to the concept of sovereignty:

…the state remains crucial for development in the Third World. The welfare state may have nearly completed its task in industrialized countries, and thus may have exhausted much of its progressive role. Indeed, in the view of some interest groups, it has overreached itself and should be rolled back, with civil society and the so-called third sector assuming as greater role in the management of society. But the developing countries are far from ready for this. In these countries it is mainly the state that can ensure that poverty and inequality can be seriously tackled; relying on civil society or NGOS would be largely wishful thinking. (Nordenstreng, 2001: 160)

Nordenstreng distinguished the intellectual track in the NWICO movement from the
political track. “No historical account of the movement towards NWICO is comprehensive,” he wrote, “unless it includes, besides the Non-Aligned Movement, UNESCO, UN, and so on, a passage on the new critical school of thought which entered Western communication scholarship more or less in the same pace as the NWICO took shape in the political arena of the so-called Third World” (Nordenstreng 1993: 252). The critical school of thought, typically media-cultural imperialism, was turned into “mantras serving political agitation rather than scientific analysis”, and thus “became hostage of high politics” (Nordenstreng, 2001: 155). It lost its momentum “at the very point (1975-76) when its message was picked up by the most determining forces of the international community, notably, the Non-Aligned Movement sponsoring NWICO, along with the East-West constellation sponsoring the Helsinki Accords” (Nordenstreng, 1993: 252). Therefore, not denying the vital contribution of media-cultural imperialism to the understanding the world of communications, Nordenstreng clarified that “it should not be used as a weapon to accuse and condemn its early proponents, who typically were less one-sided in their claims than was perceived by latter critics” (Nordenstreng, 2001: 155).

As for the active audience perspective, Nordenstreng summarized his and several other critical scholars’ view of media power, and noted that “even the most active audience reacts to the messages provided by the media and that the general terms of the game are set by the media structure rather than the meanings recipients bring to the communication process” (Nordenstreng, 2000: 336). He also reminds us of a holistic view towards media issues: “our perspective has shifted from surface radicalism – chasing the media moguls Murdock, Erkko & Co – to the fundamentals of capitalism, following the paths of Karl Marx & Co.” (Nordenstreng, 2002: 91).

2.6. Debating the Cultural Imperialism Thesis

Economic-cultural connection versus cultural independence
The most evident variation between the political economists and other schools of thinkers especially the cultural studies scholars is that the former examine cultural phenomena through a political economic mirror while the latter argue against this close economic-cultural connection by drawing people’s attention to the differences between economic domination and cultural domination. The political economists tend to bridge the gap between the economic consumption and cultural consumption; for instance, the audience commodity thesis put forward by Dallas Smythe scrutinized their similarities. The cultural studies scholars, on the contrary, tend to dismiss this connection as deterministic and reductive, ignore the similarities between cultural and economic activities, and attempt to make separations between them.

Top-down versus bottom-up
In addition to their emphasis on the indivisible connection between economy and culture, the political economists regard cultural phenomena as subordinated to a whole economic system. Many of them focus their attention on the unleashed expansion of global capitalist neo-liberalism which constitutes the most conspicuous feature of the time, and the power, they believe, both devastating and constructive, accumulated in this process of expansion is diminishing the significance of looking at culture through other perspectives. In the eyes of the cultural studies scholars, however, this is a too top-down or holistic view. What they often prefer is a bottom-up view, recording case by case what is happening when the audience is consuming cultural products. Whenever there is a newly-emerged counterexample against cultural imperialism, they would celebrate it enthusiastically though the dominant structure at the top level remain unchanged and unchallenged.
**Intention versus effects**

Much accusation of the cultural imperialism thesis lingers on the question about whether these cultural products are produced intentionally to influence the minds of the Third World people. Much criticism on the cultural imperialism from cultural studies scholars like Katz and Tomlinson is, to a large extent, based on the attack on such an intention. It is undeniable that some articulations of the political economists indicate a clear intention of imposing one’s values or culture upon another culture. However, their primary concern is more about the dynamic process and corrupt effects of such an imposition than about the intention. It is paradoxically also true to say that the cultural studies scholars have a particular interest in the effects. To differentiate this interest from that of the political economists, the two factors mentioned above can be introduced into analysis. The interest of political economists carries a holistic, top-down and economic-cultural interactive feature, whereas that of the cultural studies scholars has a specific, bottom-up and cultural independent flavor.

**Passive audience versus active audience**

Another dimension in clarifying the debate of cultural imperialism is the role of audience. How actively or inactively is the audience involved while consuming the cultural products? In accordance with the first three dimensions, the political economists argue for a comparatively low vitality of the audience in the face of “a total cultural package” (Schiller, 1991: 13-28) shaped through multiple shopping behaviors in the cultural supermarket or “a dense network of consumption relationship” bounded in an overall system (cf. Straubhaar 2007: 18), while the cultural studies scholars argue for a more active and independent role of the audience due to their ability to selectively interpret the cultural messages contained in the cultural products. In addition to these psychological resistances against foreign values, cultural studies scholars identified other buff areas, among which, the cultural-linguistic factor holds more water.

**Summing up**

There is a thesis of cultural imperialism which employs dependency, domination, and sovereignty as its central concepts. It takes a holistic top-down perspective towards the political economy of culture, interprets the powerlessness of the audience, and emphasizes the fact that cultural domination goes hand in hand with economic domination. This thesis was usefully spelled out by Schiller in his review of the original version of cultural imperialism:

> Media-cultural imperialism is a subset of the general system of imperialism. It is not freestanding; the media-cultural component in a developed, corporate economy supports the economic objectives of the decisive industrial-financial sectors (i.e., the creation and extension of the consumer society); the cultural and economic spheres are indivisible. Cultural, no less than automobile, production has its political economy. Consequently, what is regarded as cultural output also is ideological and profit-serving to the system at large. (Schiller, 1991: 296)

Conversely, there exists a corresponding counter-cultural-imperialism thesis (not to be confused with reverse cultural imperialism), which is summarized by Garofalo as four points against cultural imperialism:

> Firstly it overstates external determinants and undervalues the internal dynamics, not least those of resistance, within dependent societies. Secondly, it conflates economic power and cultural effects. Thirdly, there is an assumption that audiences are passive, and that local and
oppositional creativity is of little significance. Finally, there is an often patronizing assumption that what is at risk is the ‘authentic’ and organic culture of the developing world under the onslaught of something synthetic and inauthentic coming from the West. (cf. Golding and Harris, 1997: 5)

Scholars of each category (political economists, cultural studies scholars and administrative scholars) did their quantitative research on the international flow of information but reached some seemingly contradictory results, and the reason for this may be better explained by the academic attitude held by these scholars rather than by more mathematical work on it. The widest gap is seen between the critical communication scholars and the administrative scholars. The former group appeal to such long-standing values such as conscience, freedom, equity and democracy, pose as a critical force against the most prevailing power structures, the political and market forces alike, thus representing an original definition of intellectuals in the European context; the latter group stick to a thread of the natural sciences, appeal to and speak with numbers, and expect more repetitive verifications in the future. In this sense, they claim themselves as the real intellectuals, originating more in an American context than a European one.

Unfortunately, as it turns out, the “scientific approach” adopted by the administrative scholars only naturally put them in a subordinating position to the agent of power and serve to maintain rather than revise the status quo because most of their projects of research are assigned by the rich market or the powerful politics. The role of the disadvantaged groups is rarely reflected in their studies. It must be noted that the disadvantaged groups named here are not necessarily a minority group among a certain population. For instance, the disadvantaged group may be 4 billion people who have never made a phone call in a world population of 6.5 billion. In a Chinese context, this number is 0.8 billion peasants among a national population of 1.3 billion.

The intense debate on a cultural imperialism thesis involved both critical communication scholars and the administrative ones; nevertheless, it is less a cross-family debate between the critical and the administrative as defined by Lazarsfeld than an inside-family debate between the political economists and the culture studies scholars, the latter separated from the early political economists in the early 1980s. Both schools of thinkers take a critical line towards their studies; however, their positions on the cultural imperialism thesis are widely different and are used to serve different political interests. Both their arguments seem to have a great element of truth. Thus, it is very attractive to subscribe to Graham Murdock’s opinion, “Since modern communication is self evidently both a symbolic and economic system, its analysis has to be a matter of both/and rather than either/or.” (Murdock, 2000)

Yet, while acknowledging the utility of both paradigms, there still exists a possibility to revise Murdock’s identification of symbolic and economic elements by putting the former into a comparatively subordinating position to the latter. That is, it is more true that the cultural studies scholars are diverting people’s attention away from the structural problems and trivialize them at the same time than that the political economists are employing a reductive and deterministic perspective. Much evidence found in Latin America and Asia indicates that what individuals in developing countries are acquiring is not a doubtful modernity but a preference for modern, mostly Western, consumer good (Jeffrey James, 2000: 13). Such a result is well predicted by the political economists and embedded in their analytic framework on macro structures.
2.7. What Kind of Cultural Regulation?

These cross-family and inside-family quarrels among political economists, cultural studies scholars, and some of the administrative researchers did not happen in a political vacuum. They went in parallel with the political debate at some international organizations particularly at UNESCO. These political and academic debates in turn had their catalysts and intensifiers – shifts in foreign policies and geopolitics. Though diversified in the voices from different directions, they can be unified by asking one question: what kind of cultural regulation is needed?

Cultural studies and administrative scholars’ diagnosis and prescription on the imbalances of information flow differ completely from those of the political economists. The political economists believe that the free international flow of information has taken for granted the free domination of powerful Western cultures on weak cultures, and a responsive strategy is to control the input and circulation of foreign cultural products through those policy choices such as taxation. Cultural studies and administrative scholars would label this prescription as culture protectionism. Their opposition to this controlling strategy and promotion of the free flow doctrine are based on their argument against the cultural imperialism thesis, that is, they believe the free international flow of information will not lead to the shrinking of cultural diversity and result in a homogeneous world consumption culture.

Political economists believe that the free international flow of information can not reflect the essence of freedom; quite on the contrary, they tend to regard this so-called free flow doctrine as a well-hidden way of cultural regulation: regulation by a free market. They don’t hesitate to recognize the existence of cultural regulation, the only question left to ask is: what kind of cultural regulation is needed, political or market? There are no right or wrong with the two regulatory strategies. Both strategies carry with them certain elements of truth. While there is a high risk for the misuse of political power, there is also an equally high risk for the disastrous consequences of market regulation.

From the standpoint of the developing countries, an appropriate cultural policy in accordance with the cultural imperialism thesis is to adopt strict cultural policy, resist consumption culture, and protect cultural sovereignty. On the contrary, the appropriate cultural policy prescribed according to a counter-cultural-imperialism thesis is to open domestic cultural market to outside, allow the free circulation of foreign cultural products because the poly-semantic characteristic of cultural messages and the active interpretation from the audience would dissolve the consumption values contained in these products. At the late 1970s and early 1980s, the academic debate on cultural imperialism was complicated and copied in the political debate at UNESCO. The cultural imperialism thesis provided academic justification for the proposal in UNESCO from the Non-Aligned Movement countries for a New International Information Order (NIIO) or a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The national representatives of the NAM countries, in a natural alliance with the Socialist countries, challenged the Western free flow doctrine. Chapter 3 describes how the academic information of cultural imperialism was picked up by politics, reviews the political process of NWICO debate, and illustrates the main positions held by different blocs of political power.
Chapter 3 NWICO Politics

3.1. Three Political Forces

Nordenstreng (1999b: 238-239) identified three camps of political forces behind the NWICO movement: the developing South, the socialist East, and the capitalist West. Nordenstreng summarized the dynamics between these three camps and among each of them. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the main political force behind NWICO and representing the developing South or Third World, formed a strategic alliance with the socialist East or Second World. Together they challenged the Capitalist West or First World. Having clarified this major relationship between three camps, Nordenstreng reminded us of the delicacies among each camp and more specifically inside a specific country. He pinpointed that “it was right-wing political forces in the West that were on the defensive and hostile, mainly on anticommunist grounds”; while the liberal and leftist forces in the West – at least its intellectual elements – can be listed as “the third force in support of NWICO after the South and East.” As for the South and East, Nordenstreng observed that “NAM had internal frictions, with some of its members even at war,” and “socialist East was divided not only between USSR and China, but also among its European group – not to speak of the dissidents in each country that stood against the whole system.”

There are two important facts to note under the dynamics of the three forces. Firstly, at an ideological level, the socialist model in the case of Soviet Union and China did not represent a better alternative to the capitalist democracy. This was already evident much earlier than NWICO was initiated. Chen Duxiu (cf. Li, 2007), one of the founders of Chinese Communist Party, summarized regretfully in 1936 the differences between the Soviet democracy and Capitalist democracy by comparing five attributes. Within the British, American, and French (before surrender to Germany) democracy, (1) various parties have to publicize their guidelines to the people. After all, the people hold the votes. There is considerable debate at the Parliament, (2) arresting is forbidden without the approval of the court, (3) existence of the opposing party including the Communist is legal, (4) there is considerable freedom of speech and publication, and (5) strike is not illegal. Within then Soviet, Russian, and Italian system, (1) parliament election is dominated by the ruling party, and it is only a matter of hand-raising rather than debating, (2) secret police can arrest and even murder at will, (3) there is only an exclusive one party system, (4) there is no freedom of speech and publication, and (5) strike is a crime. With such a comparison, Chen called on the Chinese communists for an end of religious superstition. But his appeal was ignored.

Secondly, however, decolonization, as a longer, bitter and continuous process, took priority over socialist versus capitalist ideological struggles. Whatever the outcome was, socialist revolution was one of effective strategies to defend against the colonizers. This dimension of decolonization considers only the division of inhumanity and humanity, of robbing and being robbed, regardless of a perspective of democracy. This is especially true with the case of China. From 1405 to 1433 of Chinese Ming Dynasty, assisted by ship making technology and the invention of compass as early as in 11th century, Zheng He already made seven royal voyages around the world, dispensing gifts of silk, porcelain. His trip to African coast Malindi (now Kenya) brought back nothing but giraffes which in Africa stand for peace and happiness. Decades later, his European followers would use their voyages to establish commercial relations and slave trade, opening the Pandora box. Four centuries later in the early 19th century, Britain, would kick open the door of China through opium
dumping and wars, and was followed by almost every colonist power.

With this awareness, there were only two forces at the NWICO debate: the countries with a colonizing history and those with a history of being colonized. Soviet Union with its Czar past, can be put into the category of colonizers together with Britain, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, etc. Taking advantage of a decaying Chinese feudal system, Czar Russia forced upon China several unfair border treaties and occupied or separated almost one-tenth of Chinese territory which was not returned after its socialist turn. On the contrary, in spite of the mistreatment of Native Americans, the US to some degree belonged to the category of being colonized. This partly explained the fact that at the NWICO process China took an anti-hegemonic line primly against Soviet Union but remained whole-heartedly loyal to the Non-Aligned countries. As correctly noted by Nordenstreng, NWICO was in essence a decolonization offensive at a time characterized by cold war mentality based on socialist and capitalist division. It was doomed to be caught up within such division.

3.2. 1976: Non-Aligned Countries, Academics, and UNESCO

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), representing the South, had its origins at the Bandung Asian-African Conference held on 18-24 April 1955, where for the first time on the horizon of international relations emerged a new dimension of diplomacy based on Five Basic Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual-respect for each others’ territory, non-interference in other countries’ internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, peaceful co-existence, and non-aggression. The principles were initiated in 1953 by then Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and one year later were applied into China and India border negotiations. At the 1955 Bandung Africa-Asian conference, these principles proved effective in uniting the 29 participating countries who were ideologically divergent but shared a common history of being colonized. In an informal meeting in Yugoslavia in 1956, Nehru of India, Tito of Yugoslavia, and Nasser of Egypt decided to use those principles as a cooperation model at the 1st summit of NAM countries which took place on 1-6 September 1961 in Belgrade, at which NAM formally came to represent a rising South, an alternative to the East-West division or more accurately, to the US-USSR division.

At the 4th summit held on 5-9 September 1973 in Algiers, a framework of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) was outlined in efforts to restructure world trade and improve the bargaining power of developing countries. This was the first time the concept of NIEO was raised. On 1 May 1974, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration for the Establishment of a New International Economic Order. The assembly also adopted Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. The Charter “develops NIEO and stresses national sovereignty over nature resources and economic activities, non-intervention by transnational corporations (TNCS) in host countries’ internal affairs, and free and non-discriminatory development of international trade” (Golding and Harris, 1997: 211). Also recognized at the Algiers conference was that “the activities of imperialism are not confined solely to the political and economic fields, but also cover cultural and social fields”, and accordingly the conference called for “concerted action in the fields of mass communication” (Nordenstreng, 1986: 15). These initiatives passed in Algiers were given a favorable push in 1975 at the Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Lima, where a special resolution was adopted on “Cooperation in the Field of Diffusion of Information and Mass Communications Media” (ibid).

In accordance with this resolution, a Non-Aligned Symposium of Information was
convened on 26-30 March 1976, where the call for a New International Information Order was proposed in the statement of the report of committee: “Since information in the world shows a disequilibrium favoring some and ignoring others, it is the duty of the non-aligned countries and the other developing countries to change this situation and obtain the decolonization of information and initiate a new international order in information” (cf. Nordenstreng, Manet, and Kleinwachter, 1986: 282). The importance of a new international information order was reaffirmed in the Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries on Decolonization of Information in July 1976 in New Delhi, where it was stressed that “the establishment of a New International Order for Information is as necessary as the New International Economic Order” (cf. ibid). A draft declaration on decolonization of information was formulated at this conference, in which the central ideas were emphasized in the following statements:

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

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

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

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

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

6. Non-aligned countries have, in particular, been the victims of this phenomenon. Their endeavors, individual or collective, for world peace, justice, and for the establishment of an equitable international economic order have been underplayed or misrepresented by international news media. Their unity has sought to be eroded. Their efforts to safeguard their political and economic independence and stability have been denigrated.

7. Non-aligned countries have few means, in the present situation, to know about each other, except through the channel of the existing international news media and news centers, their own news media being mainly underdeveloped or undeveloped for want of required resources.

This draft declaration on decolonization of information summarized the main appeals of Non-Aligned Countries. It was ratified by the highest authority of the non-aligned countries about a month later at the 5th summit held 16-19 August 1976 in Colombo, which confirmed the achievements of the March Tunis conference and July New Delhi conference by reemphasizing that “the vast and ever growing gap between communication capacities in non-aligned countries and in the advanced countries” is a legacy of the colonial past and endorsing that “a new international order in the fields of information and mass communication is as vital as a new international economic order” (cf. ibid).

No historical account of the NWICO media reform movement is complete “without a passage on the new critical school of thought which entered Western communication scholarship more or less in the same pace as the NWICO took shape in the political
arena of the so-called Third World” (Nordenstreng, 1993: 252). A section of Chapter 2 on cultural imperialism was already devoted to the discussion of the rise of the school of critical communication research. Here, the discussion focuses on the institutional efforts made through academic conferences. For the academics, the road to 1976 was a continuous debate on the concept of freedom in the meetings of experts of UNESCO or the biennial meetings of its consultative research institution – the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). These conferences were often coordinated through UNESCO’s national commission in individual countries. The IAMCR was established in 1957 and its foundation was referred to as an institutional landmark. Many of the contacts among critical communication scholars were facilitated by this international professional organization (ibid, p. 261). A breakthrough conference of the IAMCR was held in 1966 in Herzeg Novi, Yugoslavia, where critical communication scholars such as Kaarle Nordenstreng, Herbert Schiller, Ablex Edelstein, George Gerbner, and Yassen Zassoursky came into contact (ibid).

The next IAMCR meeting, held in Ljubljana in 1968 and again in Yugoslavia, was entitled “Mass Media and International Understanding” symposium, at which it was noted that: The system of manipulating man’s thinking is getting accomplished in such a way that a contemporary individual with his “freedom” is often becoming, without realizing it, a prisoner of foreign concepts of the world for they are being incessantly and systematically forced upon him (cf. Galtung and Vincent, 1992: 73). The 1968 Ljubljana meeting of IAMCR was “one of the first international meetings to discuss the need of fundamental changes in the area of international information and communication” (Pavlic and Hamelink, 1985: 13). In the next year, 1969, in the Montreal meeting of experts of UNESCO, the doctrine of the free flow of information was recognized as a possible obstacle to international understanding: News media are capable of improving and broadening international understanding, but inter-cultural communication does not necessarily or automatically lead to improved international understanding…we believe, on the contrary, that at the present time, what is known as the “free flow of information” is in fact a ‘one-way’ flow rather than genuine exchange of information (cf. Galtung and Vincent, 1992: 73).

Also in 1969, Schiller published his Mass Media and American Empire, in which he dwelled his analysis upon the US information policy in the post-war period. He made it clear what freedom meant for the US by quoting President Truman: There is one thing that Americans value even more than peace. It is freedom: freedom of worship – freedom of speech – and freedom of enterprise (cf. Schiller, 1969: 6). Truman considered freedom of enterprise as a priority in a world where the US towered as an economic giant. Under a global context, Schiller interpreted that freedom of speech in the US information policy signified “the unrestrained opportunity for the dissemination of messages by the American mass media in the world arena” or “the free flow of corporate media products and information” (ibid). The same concern was also raised in the 1973 Symposium on the International Flow of Television Programs, which was chaired by Nordenstreng and was attended by, in addition to Schiller, other critical communication scholars such as Dallas Smythe, Peter Golding, and Thomas Guback. In the opening speech given by Finnish President Kekkonen and drafted partly by Nordenstreng and Schiller, the negative consequences of laissez-faire freedom were stressed this way: The traditional Western concept of freedom, which states that the state’s only obligation is to guarantee laissez-faire, has meant that society has allowed freedom of speech to be realized with the means at the disposal of each individual…in this way freedom of speech has in practice become the freedom of the well-to-do. (Conference proceedings, 1973)
The central message is clear if the speeches of the two presidents were read comparatively. Put into the context of the international debate on information flow, the free flow doctrine promoted by the US in UNESCO signified that the countries with less material capability were deprived of an equal voice in international communication. One could imagine a much more deteriorating situation when the messages, represented by the news stories of the four dominant western news agencies, were biased against the developing countries. Thus the Tampere Symposium recommended that: Efforts should be made to redress the imbalance of resources which presently characterizes the international flow and direction of information among nations, especially in areas unable to determine their own cultural destiny, whether as nations or within nations. Several founding principles of Non-Aligned Countries were coincidentally articulated as part of conclusions of this Symposium: It is the sentiment of this symposium that information between nations should be based on the principle of peaceful co-existence...Information flows should serve the mutual understanding of peoples and the cause of peace...this pre-supposes non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, non-discrimination against people and races and the exclusion of war propaganda. (ibid)

The terminologies such as “peaceful co-existence” and “non-interference” are conducive to the founding principles of the Non-aligned countries. Nordenstreng attributed these words to Smythe, who just came back from a visit to China. Smythe and NAM shared a common source, namely, China, but no direct link between them was discernible. The direct link was formally established in 1976 in the Non-Aligned Symposium of Information in Tunis. The participants of that conference were not confined to politicians. Rather, it received, for the first time in a NAM occasion, “a significant input from communication scholarship” The speech and the papers of the scholars were sent to the Tunisian organizers in advance for the drafting of their keynote speeches. The representatives included communication scholars such as Kaarle Nordenstreng, Slavko Splichal, and Breda Pavlic. Academic ideas found their way into political demand for a new order. Before, the political track and the academic track were for the most part two forces developing independently without direct interactions. Now, politics and academics formally came together. Constructively this meant a concerted effort to achieve justice and equality in international communication. (Nordenstreng, 1993)

Conversely, this also meant that the academic concepts, cultural imperialism or freedom, were now in the harness of political forces and were hence subject to uses on good or bad wills of politicians. In fact, this was “the very point,” as Nordenstreng observed, when the message sent from the various meetings of experts of UNESCO was picked up by NAM – at that time “the most determining forces of the international community,” and when the Panel of Experts of UNESCO lost its momentum (ibid, p. 252). The academic paradigm of cultural-media imperialism and its cousin NWICO were “turned into mantras serving political agitation rather than scientific analysis” (Nordenstreng, 2001: 155). Galtung and Vincent (1992: 72) categorized these expert meetings or IAMCR meetings as “early UNESCO actions.” This categorization accentuated the continuity of various UNESCO meetings before and after 1976; yet it seems more appropriate and important to draw a dividing line in 1976 than following a chronological order of narration of UNESCO actions. Before 1976, UNESCO activities regarding the information flow were for the most part in the nature of academic research; after 1976, “over-politicization makes intergovernmental structures, such as UNESCO, nonconductive for a truly scientific approach” (Nordenstreng, 1993: 253).
The Non-Aligned Countries won out in the struggle between the US and the Soviet Union at the 19th session of UNESCO General Conference was held in Nairobi from 26 October to 30 November 1976. The General Conference adopted a Tunisian resolution aimed at the establishment and improvement of the information system in the developing countries. The resolution invites the Director General: to pay very special attention to the activities of the bodies (the Non-Aligned Countries Coordinating Council and the Coordinating Committee of the Press Agency Pool of the Non-Aligned Countries) responsible for coordinating and implementing the information program of the Non-Aligned Countries, originating in the recommendations relating to information and communication adopted by the Symposium of Non-Aligned Countries on Communication (Tunis, March 1976) and the Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries on the Press Agency Pool (New Delhi, July 1976), and approved by the Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Colombo (August 1976) (Resolution 4.142, UNESCO, 1976).

The campaign for such a resolution was led by Mustapha Masmoudi of Tunisia, arguing on the ground that the US giants such as the Associated Press and United Press International were presenting a distorting picture of the Third World by concentrating on the negative events and their negative aspects. A pooled Third World news agency will strike some balance for diversity. This resolution also led to a decision from the Director General to establish an International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems and “assign it the task of undertaking a study of the totality of communication problems in contemporary society” (Origin and Mandate, 1978). The US reluctantly accepted this in order to focus its fire power on the Soviet Union and avoid confrontation with the Third World countries (Altschull, 1984: 216). This had made UNESCO function more as “an important follow-up agency for relevant recommendations of the Non-Alignment Countries” (Nordenstreng, 1984: 108). This was an evidence of the result of their concerted efforts made in Tunis, New Delhi, and Colombo. All of these activities were condensed within a short time frame of about 11 months.

The International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems became known as the MacBride Commission in 1977, when the Director-General informed the 103rd session of the Executive Board that “the Commission will be composed of sixteen personalities chosen from the principal regions of the world, belonging to various professions and representing diverse intellectual currents” and that “because of the complexity of its task, the Commission will probably only submit an interim report to the next session of the General Conference, with its final report due to be published in 1979 and examined by the Conference at its session in 1980” (Origin and Mandate, UNESCO, 1978). The Soviet Union obviously lost the battle at this conference but it was anyway a battle of no cost. The Non-Aligned Countries enhanced their achievements and formally started their international attempts for a new information order. The West succeeded in delaying the adoption of a mass media declaration but at the same time they realized that it was only a matter of time that a declaration would finally surface. After the conference, all sides learnt a lesson and started to take a comparatively realistic approach, as Nordenstreng (1984: 113) summarized: “…as far as tactics are concerned, Nairobi was a lesson for all: that there was a limit set by the Western side beyond which one could not compromise the “free flow” position, and that there was another borderline, determined by the de facto coalition between the developing and socialist countries, beyond which one could not proceed to compromise the “new order position.”
This was 1976. In one sense, it was a year of great significance not only in terms of the convergence of power under an umbrella through which “a real link was established between NAM and critical scholarship” (Nordenstreng, 1993: 267), but also in terms of the impressive speed that those forces moved from the local to the regional and then to the international level. Their concerted efforts were quickly evident in the resolutions adopted at the 1976 General Conference of UNESCO. As Pavlic and Hamelink (1985: 9) noted, with the Colombo meeting of NAM countries and the Nairobi General Conference of UNESCO, the idea of a new international information order was “officially launched in the international arena.” In the other sense, however, 1976 was a year of no significance, considering the fact that those events were a natural consequence of the accumulation of power, political and economic power eventually leading to an appeal in the arena of information. The 20th session of the General Conference held from 24 October to 28 November 1978 in Paris approved with consensus a mass media declaration fully titled “Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.”

In addition to the formal adoption of the mass media declaration, the adoption of two resolutions at this General Conference deserves special attention. One resolution was concerned with an expansion of the 1976 mission of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, or the MacBride Commission. Under the new circumstance in 1978, the General Conference specified the mission of the MacBride Commission and adopted a resolution that, after an appreciation of the interim report handed in by the Commission, invited the sixteen members of the Commission to “address themselves, in the course of preparing their final report, to the analysis and proposal of concrete and practical measures leading to the establishment of a more just and effective world information order”, and invited the Director General to “organize for the twenty-first session of the General Conference, procedures for the consideration of the final report of the Commission that will permit representatives of the United Nations, its Specialized Agencies and relevant non-governmental organizations to make known their points of view…”(Resolution 4/9.1/3, UNESCO, 1978). The other resolution invited the Director General to “convene as early as possible after the conclusion of this twentieth session of the General Conference a planning meeting of representatives of governments, to develop a proposal for institutional arrangements to systematize collaborative consultation on communications development activities, needs, and plans” (Resolution 4/9.4/2, UNESCO, 1978).

3.3. 1980: MacBride Report

The initiative for the Commission for the Study of Communication Problems was proposed at the 19th General Conference of UNESCO and was issued four years later at the 21st General Conference. It was a classic demonstration of the tensions gathered in 1976 in the UN system and especially in UNESCO, where these tensions became politically explicit on the debate over the draft declaration of the mass media, and became locked in a state of standby. In addition to the accumulation of political forces, another factor contributed to the political impasse of 1976, which was the confusion over whether UNESCO was entitled to set the normative standards for the mass media (Hamelink, 1997: 71-2). Though being compatible with the mission enshrined in UNESCO’s Constitution to contribute to international understanding, this standard-setting action seemed to fly against the early division of labor between UNESCO and the UN. The normative role of standard-setting regarding the
information and communication issues was assigned to the UN General Assembly, and the role of technical assistance/implementation, to the specialized agencies of the UN such as UNESCO.

In 1976 at the 19th UNESCO General Conference, the irreconcilable conflicts between the West and the South supported by the East over the draft declaration of the mass media added up to the suspicion about UNESCO’s competence and status as a norm-setter. Assigning a commission for the study of communication problems can be read as a way to get out of such an impasse. For the West it was “a maneuver to play down an anti-imperialist momentum in the Non-Aligned Movement” (Nordenstreng, 2005a: 2). The MacBride Commission membership demonstrated a clear division across the political and ideological line with a makeup of sixteen representatives, six from the First World, two from the Second World, and eight from the Third World. Most of these representatives have a composite background of being a politician, journalist or academic. The final report represents an overall agreement reached among this group of wise men. The disagreements were marked in 36 comments made by individual members in the form of footnote. Before going into a more general review of the report, it is meaningful to analyze the some fundamental disagreements embodied in these footnotes and derived from the diverse (more ideologically than professionally) background of these members. The comments given by the US Elie Abel, Canadian Betty Zimmerman, and Soviet Sergei Losev are particularly enlightening in sorting out the roots of disputes.

The commission believed that citizens’ band radio, then practiced in over 25 countries in Europe and Northern America, may be useful for “some regions without the necessary telecommunications infrastructures”. To that opinion, Soviet representative Sergei Losev gave his opposing idea that “it is not of any use for the countries which just started developing their own communication system, since they will certainly rather start with setting up a national radio station and with supplying its citizens with necessary transistors to receive these broadcasts.” Losev’s comment indeed corresponded more accurately to the real need of the developing countries of that time. The suggestion of the setting up community radio seemed to be a misplaced judgment made according to the situation in the developed countries. While here Losev’s argument was favorable for the most urgent need of some developing countries, he at another time was arguing for the state control of the media, a clear political line promoted by the Soviet Union. In the commission’s strong condemnation of censorship and arbitrary control of information and suggestion that anything like that should be abolished, Losev’s dissent went so far as to argue that this problem “is within the national legislation of each country and is to be solved within the national, legal framework taking in due consideration the national interests of each country.” (MacBride et al, 1980: 266)

The commission believed that broadcasting stations under the pressure of the market mechanism tend to design programs which may attract “the widest possible audience”, which in turn leads to the degrading of its quality. To that opinion, the Canadian representative Betty Zimmerman expressed her reservation, saying that the generalization is too “sweeping” by pointing out that much programming done in the field of public broadcasting is tailored for special interests and minority audiences. Zimmerman disagreed on another point which was the central line of dispute not only among the commission members but also outside of it as displayed in the overall NWICO debate. Upon the worries about mass media’s effects in spreading fear and violence, the commission suggested that the magical power of the media should be used in an opposite direction – building peace and understanding. “If the media thus
have the power to spread fear, why should they not exercise this same power in order to free men from distrust and fear and to assert their unshakeable opposition to all forms of war and violence, and to all recourse to force in international relations?” Zimmerman gave her disagreement of this strong appeal on the ground that it is an “unacceptable concept” for her to view the situation from the standpoint of “using” the media. She implied in the comment that the media in the case of market situation are inherently free and not subject to the use of outside forces.

In his well-known *Agents of Power*, Altschull rightly took issue of this point and criticized Zimmerman’s opinion that the media can not be used. He pointed out that the press from the starting point of their origin has always been used and manipulated by the individuals and groups in power. “That the news media are powerful instruments cannot be doubted; what is in dispute is how that power is exercised, and who does the exercising” (Altschull, 1984: 233). The US representative Elie Abel took a similar stand with Zimmerman in his comments on journalistic codes and media ownership. The commission members agreed in general that in spite of the existence of “two essentially distinct conceptions of journalism” and “it is at present difficult to formulate a code,” “there are no reasons to consider it unattainable or that its pursuit should be abandoned for reasons of principle.” Abel presented an opposite idea, saying that it is impossible for a formulation of a code of ethics that would be compatible both with a media system of political control and with another system “independent” and “skeptical” of the state. In that way, he was arguing for the status quo in the US, which leaves the media under pure market logic. At another point, Abel refused to join other members in the suggestion of limiting concentration and monopolization. Abel’s comment was obviously directed against the Soviet Union, saying that “it is travesty to speak of measures against concentration and monopolization in countries where the media are themselves established as state monopolies, or operate as an arm of the only authorized political party” (MacBride et al, 1980: 266).

These fundamental disagreements determined that the MacBride report was internally inclined more towards a political and diplomatic exercise looking for compromise than towards an academic and scientific analysis seeking for truth. The shortcoming did not escape the attention of the first round of reviews made by a group of commentators almost immediately following the publication of the report. The nine critical comments made from as many countries were edited into a booklet in 1981 by Cees Hamelink and republished in 1982 in the *Mass Communication Review Yearbook*. The commentators gave various emphases in their assessment of the report. Alfred Opobor from Nigeria focused on its atheoretical nature, arguing that “although the report is useful to those who have little prior knowledge of the problems, it has little to contribute to those who look for new theories and data about the field.” Taking issue of the general mission of the Commission to give a picture of totality of communication problems in modern society, Opobor believed that there is not such a totality and compared the wise men of the MacBride Commission to the blind men in the fokktale of the elephant. Kaarle Nordenstreng from Finland focused on its ahistorical nature, arguing that “it looks at the history of communication in isolation, in a paradigm where communication is seen as related to but not organically linked to other social phenomena”, and also on its ahumanistic nature, which is “typical of a functional-positivistic approach.” Nordenstreng concluded that the report did not present a “coherent” picture of one world as its title claimed. (cf. Hamelink, 1997)

Tamas Szecsko from Hungary was critical of the report’s inadequate coverage of the problems of the developing and socialist countries. Szecsko questioned also that the
The report's treatment of technology was open to the interpretation of technological determinism. Oswaldo Capriles from Venezuela pointed to the report's lack of clarification for the definition of the New International Information Order. Nabil H. Dajani from Lebanon found that the report gave too much reflection of materialistic values and the balanced flow between nations at the cost of a little reflection of moralistic values and the information flow between the rich and the poor. Eapen K. Eapen from India commented on the lack of diagnoses, observing that the report treated only four Ws – what, when, where and who, but not how. Jorg Becker from Germany found that “although the authors realize that media technology and media content cannot be analyzed detached from one another, they do not proceed to discuss it within a dialectic perspective.” Cees Hamelink from the Netherlands pointed to the report’s insufficient criticism and inadequate treatment of “the vast politico-economic power exercised by those transnational corporations.” Herbert Schiller from the US observed the report’s failure to deal with the systematic patterns of the problems caused by communication technology. (ibid)

These early comments were quite negative in their review of the report, and the negative assessment was indeed based on the flaws of the MacBride report but should be read with a conscious understanding of the time these comments were given, a time when the NWICO debate was still in a contesting field and the possibility of a better definition of the concept of NWICO remained open. Along with the approval of the MacBride report in the 21st session of the UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade in 1980, another resolution, so named as “Venezuelan resolution” according to the proposing country, was passed in effort to find a comprehensive and conclusive definition of the NWICO concept. The Venezuelan resolution “invites the Director-General to take immediate steps to initiate studies with a view to drawing up the fundamental principles underlying a new world information and communication order and exploring the possibility and desirability of such studies serving as a basis for a Declaration on the Establishment of a New World Information and Communication Order” (cf. Nordenstreng, 1999b: 252). In counterattack against the MacBride report and this resolution, the First World journalists supported by their corporate affiliations organized in May 1981 a responding conference and announced the Declaration of Talloires. The nine comments of the MacBride Report were written between the UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade and the Talloires conference in France, in a time frame when the concept of NWICO was still being hotly debated, which means its fate was not yet doomed and open to the probability of improvement.

Later on, especially after the US withdrawal in 1984 when a better definition of NWICO became impossible, however, MacBride report in hinder sight turned out to be the most comprehensive record of NWICO achievement, among the its three official outcomes. Compared with the other two legacies – the Mass Media Declaration and the IPDC, the MacBride report functioned better as a rallying point. This is partly due to its comprehensiveness in taking stock of the developments of the NWICO debate, and partly due to the nature of the other two legacies. The Mass Media Declaration suffered from the politics than the MacBride report, and the political process behind it, which was detailed by Nordenstreng in his *The Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO*, was more meaningful than the Declaration itself. The IPDC went back to the old treatment of communication problems and was transformed into a technical platform. In this sense, the MacBride report became a milestone in the history of international communication. The report did not turn into a milestone immediately after it was published but after the fall of the NWICO movement, when the door to establish another more defining milestone was closed.
Under such a context, the distance-marking value of the report was later emphasized following the first round of critical comments. All these comments contributed to the awareness that the report as a milestone was not a meteorite that landed on Earth at exactly the right time in the right place but was academically a crystallization of many past research results and politically a consensus reached across ideological and economic spectrum. Nobody would deny the contribution the Commission made towards communication, which arose from its spirit of “agree to disagree” and the characteristic of “stock-taking.” The most innovative part of the MacBride report is its suggestion of the democratization of communication, where the right to communicate was upheld as a basic human right to integrate some other rights: “Communication needs in a democratic society should be met by the extension of specific rights such as the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public communication – all elements of a new concept the right to communicate,” and “in developing what might be called a new era of social rights, we suggest all the implications of the right to communicate be further explored” (MacBride et al, 1980: 265). After the fall of NWICO, right to communicate has been upheld by media reform activists and baptized into communication rights at the WSIS period. This descending process into media reform activism was recorded in Chapter 4, together with developments in other civil society activism, which became increasingly integrated as evidenced in the world summits organized by the UN.

While some scholars were moving towards action and campaigning, some others meanwhile took MacBride Report as their point of departure for academic research. The full title of the MacBride Report is “Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow – Many Voice, One World – Towards a New, More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order.” From the MacBride report onwards, there have been continuous academic efforts, mainly deriving from the critical communication scholars, devoted to the reviewing and updating of the MacBride report. After the first collective action taken by Hamelink et al (1981) in Communication in the Eighties: A Reader on the “MacBride Report”, similar actions were taken in autumn 1981 by Journal of Communication (Singh and Gross; Zassoursky and Losev; and Anawalt), in 1992 by Gazette: the International Journal for Mass Communication Studies (Sussman, Beam, and Giffard), in 2005 by Javnost-The Public (Osolnik et al). The report marked its influence over several books through its catchword “Many Voices, One World,” and these works range from Few Voices, Many Worlds: Towards a Media Reform Movement (Traber and Nordenstreng, 1992), “Many More Voices, Another World” in Towards Equity in Global Communication: MacBride Update (Vincent et al, 1999), to Democratizing Global Media: One World, Many Struggles (Hackett and Zhao, 2005), and to Many Voices, One Vision: The Right to Communicate in Practice (Lee et al, 2006).

Besides these works explicitly in memorial of the MacBride Report, most literature on NWICO would devote a chapter or a section on the MacBride Report, and this is evident in Agents of Power (Altschull, 1984, 1995), in a 1990 special issue of Media, Culture and Society (e.g. Splichal) edited by Sparks and Roach, in Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalization, Communication and the International Order (e.g. Hamelink) edited by Goldering and Harris and published in 1997, and in a 2005 issue of the Global Media and Communication (e.g. Padovani). Slavko Splichal’s Principles of Publicity and Press Freedom, published in 2002, is a typical example of historical and philosophical thinking. While the concrete appearance of the concept can be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s of Arct’s ideas and was picked up again by the MacBride Commission as above-mentioned, Splichal tracked the concept further back to the ideas of such philosophers as Immanuel Kant, observing that “a
personal right to communicate is derivable from Kant’s idea of publicity” and that this right to communicate is supplementary to freedom of the press (2002: 167). The central message of Splichal is that the right to communicate is philosophically justified as an alternative to both the representative publicness model and the press freedom model.

3.4. 1984: The US Withdrawal from UNESCO and Its Reason

The 21st session of UNESCO General Conference held in Belgrade in 1980 brought together the three official outcomes of NWICO. Not only was IPDC formally established, but also the meaning of NWICO was clarified in Resolution 4/19 adopted based on the recommendations offered in the MacBride Report. The General Conference considers that:

A. This new world information and communication order could be based, among other considerations, on:
   (1) Elimination of the imbalances and communication imbalances and inequalities which characterized the present situation
   (2) Elimination of the negative effects of certain monopolies, public or private, and excessive concentrations
   (3) Removal of the internal and external obstacles to a free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and ideas
   (4) Plurality of sources and channels of information
   (5) Freedom of the press and of information
   (6) The freedom of journalists and all professionals in the communication media, a freedom inseparable from responsibility
   (7) The capacity of developing countries to achieve improvement of their own situations, notably by providing their own equipment, by training their personnel, by improving their infrastructure and making their information and communication media suitable to their needs and aspirations
   (8) The sincere will of developed countries to help them attain these objectives
   (9) Respect for each people’s cultural identity and for the right of each nation to inform the world about its interests, its aspirations and its social and cultural values
   (10) Respect for the right of all peoples to participate in international exchanges of information on the basis of equality, justice and mutual benefit
   (11) Respect for the right of the public, of ethnic and social groups, and of individuals to have access to information sources and to participate actively in the communication process

B. this new world information and communication order should be based on the fundamental principles of international law, as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations (Resolution 4/19, UNESCO, 1980).

Nordenstreng usefully pointed out the intricacies in the terming of a) and b). He observed that all the 11 points under paragraph a) were “among other considerations” on which the new order could be based, and were thus pro-West; while paragraph b) was a normative position formulating what the new order should be based, and was therefore pro-South and East. “The latter endorses the general position that the fundamental principles of international law constitute a clearly defined basis for all international relations, including those in the field of journalism and mass communication” (Nordenstreng, 1999b: 251). Paragraph b) was in its essence an expression not only of the respect for the national sovereignty but also of the preference of multilateral solutions. Belgrade is a turning point. From then on the US conservative forces reversed the cooperative strategy of the Carter Administration and unleashed a comprehensive counterattack against NWICO. The World Press Freedom
Committee organized a conference in Talloires, France, and received participation of 63 delegates from 21 countries. Together they issued the Talloires Declaration which mobilized a collective campaign against NWICO. "After ten years of losing ground in this long-simmering controversy," Rosemary Righter noted, "western governments are at last formulating a common strategy to reverse the trend towards state interference in the exchange of news and information and its content" (cf. ibid, p. 255).

Talloires Declaration was welcomed by the Reagan Administration. Political support immediately followed, ranging from Vice-President Bush’s demanding UNESCO to stop controlling press freedom, to the Assistant Secretary of State Abrams’ recommending UNESCO to import the First Amendment of the US Constitution to solve world communication problems (Kleinwachter, 1993: 17). These pressures from conservative journalists, publishers, and diplomats led to the slowing down of the pace of NWICO at the 22nd session of the General Conference in Paris in 1983. Kleinwachter observed that this halt of progress were showed at three levels. Practically, there was a shortage of fund to further implement the IPDC though a number of concrete communication projects were realized; conceptually, NWICO round table failed to become a permanent institution for conceptual discussions; and normatively, “the decision of the Belgrade General Conference to draft a NWICO Declaration was never seriously considered” (ibid). These signs predicted that the disputes were tilting towards a soft landing. Yet, in spite of favorable changes for the West, the Reagan Administration decided to fight yesterday’s war.

The US withdrew its membership from UNESCO in December 1984. The official charges that it lashed out against UNESCO were found in a withdrawal notification letter sent to UNESCO by George Shultz, the Secretary of State, who complained that “trends in the policy, ideological emphasis, budget and management of UNESCO were detracting from the Organization’s effectiveness” (US State Department letter, December 28, 1983); a memorandum prepared by William Harley, communications consultant of the State Department, who commented that UNESCO need to overcome the “shortcomings” such as “program orientation, politicization, budget growth, and management” (US State Department memo, February 9, 1984); and the comments of Alan Romberg, spokesman of State Department, who said that “UNESCO has extraneously politicized virtually every subject it deals with, has exhibited hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and free press, and has demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion” (New York Times, December 30, 1983).

These official charges can be summarized into (1) mismanagement, (2) threat to a free press, (3) budget growth, and (4) politicization. The fire power of these charges were generally directed to UNESCO and specifically concentrated on the communication issues. None of these charges, however, stood. For the first charge, even if there was any mismanagement, it may well be caused by the Western personnel themselves, considering the fact that forty-four percent of the higher and middle-ranking executives in UNESCO Secretariat were either from Western Europe or North America, and the fact that there was only one Soviet bloc representative among 40 professionals in the communications sector (Nordenstreng, 1984: 93). The evidence refuting the second charge of threatening press freedom is that UNESCO in fact had the support of an absolute majority among journalists in its promotion of press freedom. The leaders of five non-governmental journalism organizations which represented 40, 000 journalists worldwide issued a joint statement appreciating the role that UNESCO had played in facilitating communication among journalists in the
absence of the governmental interference (ibid).

For the third charge of budget growth, Director General M’Bow, in his reply to the letter of Schultz, clarified that the budget that UNESCO would adopt for 1984-85 was around 56 million dollars less than 1983-84 – the largest reduction ever to have been made in the UN system (DG/1533, UNESCO, January 18, 1984). In contrast, the budget of some other international organizations such as the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization, and the Food and Agricultural Organization had respectively increased at the same time by 4, 12, and 15 percent (World Forum, 1984: 119). Thus, the budget of UNESCO was actually shrinking. And this size of budget was smaller than that of “many an American university” (ibid, p. 120), or “a cost overrun for one nuclear submarine” (ibid, p. 126). It was unreasonable that the US would accuse UNESCO of a non-existent budget expansion. The fourth charge of over-politicization can not be as easily brushed off as the other three charges since the concept of politicization defies definition. Yet, a clearer understanding of what politicization means can be achieved through concrete examples. The US definition of the concept would view the insistence of the Arab countries in inserting an anti-Zionist reference in the Mass Media Declaration as politicization; but it would not think its own insistence in inserting a condemnation of the South Korea plane incident in document regarding IPDC as politicization. This charge is therefore a typical imposition of double standard.

The autumn 1984 issue of the Journal of Communication offers a compelling answer for the US pull-out from UNESCO: hostility towards multilateralism. In the cover picture of this issue, two letters – “U” and “S” – were depicted as falling down from “UNESCO.” Half of the 221 pages were devoted to the discussion over the reason of the US withdrawal from UNESCO. The journal sent invitations to “organizations, public figures, and scholars holding diverse views on the US decision, about evenly divided between critics and supporters.” It turned out, however, that 16 out of 26 subscribers were critical of the US withdrawal and believed the decision was directly related to the US hostility towards multilateralism. The terminologies of reference were diverse, ranging from a rejection to “the one nation-one vote principle” (ibid, p. 94), the intolerance of “a multi-polar world” (ibid, p. 97), a reduction of “the influence of multilateral organization” or an “assault on multilateralism” (ibid, p. 99-100), the avoidance of the “risks of pluralist decision-making” (ibid, p. 103), a guarantee of “American supremacy” (ibid, p. 117), a build-up of “hegemony” (ibid, p. 118), an objection to “the whole United Nations system and general multilateralism” (ibid, p. 126), to the undermining of “majority rule” (ibid, p. 129).

Even Sussman, a supporter of the withdrawal, discerned that “it appeared that the United States is using UNESCO to alter or withdraw from the wider UN system” (ibid, p. 162). While most of the other nine supporters think that the US withdrawal was due to a threat of press freedom posed by NWICO, they did not find any UNESCO resolution to support their idea and actually they admitted that there was none. Their argument was based on their sensing of a potential threat. According to these academic discussions in the Journal of Communication, the withdrawal can be best understood a warning bell that the US rang to tell other international organizations to respect free control of power instead of democratic principle of multilateralism. However, when we observe, with the advantages of hindsight, the issue in the context of US information policy, the reason for withdrawal acquires more complexity. Chances are good that the US withdrawal is a one-arrow-two-birds outcome. On the one hand, the US signaled a strategic shift in its foreign policy from multilateralism to unilateralism. On the other hand, even if without the need of a purposeful action to
warn others, the US had sufficient reason to remove NWICO completely from UNESCO agenda.

A then neglected fact is that the years around 1980 were the transitional period for information sector to become the central market expansion area, and all the surrounding political, economic, technological, military conditions had become mature to concentrate on that transition (H. Schiller, 1989; Manuel Castells, 2004; D. Schiller, 2007). The US established diplomatic relationship with China, reached with it a strategic quasi alliance against Soviet “hegemony” and “domination” (January 1979). An immediate following China-Vietnam war freed the US from its heavy military burden in Vietnam. Soviet Union, on the one hand, were busy with supporting Vietnam to fight against China, on the other, were preoccupied with the war in Afghanistan. Under such circumstance, the ascending of Reagan Administration in 1980 gained time to react against stagnation by economic deregulation and military Keynesianism. In the technological aspect, the progress in the new communication technologies in the late 1970s and 1980s had equipped the transnational enterprise with better capability to manage their transnational data flows with less need of international cooperation.

Those new changes failed to capture the attention of the news agency attackers in the Third World. Even UNESCO officials, too occupied in their educational and cultural activities, were not able to perceive these new transnational pulses (H. Schiller, 1989: 307). This lack of attention, argued Herbert Schiller, allowed the US to “sidestep almost entirely the jurisdiction of the UN and UNESCO,” and at the same time to enlist other forums, “where the voting arrangements and decision-making allow the United States more influence and maneuverability” (ibid). The information sector was a central aspect of those changes in the political, military, economic, and technological surroundings. Exactly in this aspect, Dan Schiller pinpointed that the appeal of NAM countries ran directly against the US policy. While NAM countries insisted that “information must be understood as a social good and cultural product, and not a material commodity,” the US policy stated that “in international commerce, information and communication are commodities, whose value is rising as the recognition of their importance grows” (cf. D. Schiller, 2007: 38). “Were the demand for an NIIO to prevail, the result would be to divert and potentially to block attempts by the United States, then unquestionably the world’s paramount economic, military, political, and cultural power, to recast information into a general foundation for profit-making market expansion” (ibid).

Media is another unelectable factor in the US pullout. Since 1976, eight years of persistent depicting NWICO as an enemy of press freedom and framing it as a cold war confrontation on the US media agenda had successfully translated into American public opinion. Chilean researcher Raquel Salinas analyzed Associated Press’s nine day’s coverage, consisting of 1528 lines of 51 teletypes, of the 1976 Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies held in Costa Rica. He found UNESCO and the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) were described as David and Goliath in terms of press freedom. “UNESCO and the conference are threatening the freedom of press at the regional and world level, by encouraging government control of news media and the rest of media in general” while “IAPA will continue to fight against any formula or policy which might prevent the people from being informed by an independent and free press” (Salinas, 1977: 37). A. H. Raskin, the Associate Director of American News Council, organized across the US a comprehensive examination of 448 news clippings and 206 editorials regarding the 1986 UNESCO Belgrade General Conference. He reached a self-critical yet
ethnocentric conclusion that the coverage on Belgrade conference “sets a poor example for Third World journalists and other skeptics on what they should find admirable as a model of press freedom and immunity from governmental control in Western journalistic practice” (Raskin, 1981: 174).

Roach (1981: 175-87) examined 196 items of French media reports of the Belgrade UNESCO conference and concluded coverage on NWICO was “at best incomplete and at worst openly biased.” Sparks and Schlesinger (1993: 130) observed the scarce British press coverage of UNESCO and NWICO during 1980 and 1981 and concluded that “the vast majority of the adult British population received no information, whether accurate or biased, from the British press on the subjects of UNESCO and the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO).” NAM countries, subject to their media capability and cultural-linguistic barriers, did not organize any media campaign, at home or in the West, to publicize their intention, though their sentiments to change the status quo were high. Worst of all, the Western politicians and journalistic associations on behalf of the commercial interests of the media synchronized together and achieved what Non-Aligned Countries failed to do. The Heritage Foundation lashed out a powerful campaign against virtually everything UNESCO represented. The president of Heritage Foundation actually attributed President Reagan’s decision to withdraw from UNESCO to the successful Heritage Campaign.

The Western media in general were hostile to NWICO movement. Against such a backdrop, it was impossible to generate sufficient and positive public awareness about international communication problems. The debate on NWICO was confined to a tiny circle of political and intellectual elite, with the public either isolated or ill-informed. It was in the sense that Hamelink, in a letter to Nordenstreng, argued that “the lack of people’s participation” is the most critical factor that resulted in the failure of NWICO (Hamelink, 2001: 251). From a purely media-centered perspective, suffice it to say that it was exactly what NWICO criticized failed NWICO. The impossibility to publicize the NWICO to the media especially the Western media is due exactly to the appeals NAM countries concentrated on. Without any efforts to positively mobilize the public through the media, NWICO was doomed to be stigmatized by the Western media from the very beginning of its being initiated. When, by the early 1980s, NWICO, together with its hosting organization UNESCO was turned into “a rotten apple”, “a bull’s eye”, or “a thorn in the flesh,” it was natural that the dominating Western conservative political forces made a dramatic move to withdraw.
Chapter 4 Information Society Thesis

There are two widely divergent strands of academic thinking on the notion of information society. One strand of thinking foresees a new form of society, be it called postindustrial (Bell, 1973), third wave (Toffler, 1980), digital (Negroponte, 1995) or network (Castells, 1996). They define this information society by the application of the revolutionary information and communication technologies (ICTs) glorified as technologies of freedom (Pool, 1983). They emphasize the discontinuity and superiority of information society to its industrial or agrarian past. The other strand of thinking is essentially an antithesis of information society. They observe the information society thesis as anti-holistic (Webster, 2006), as the favored legitimating ideology for the dominant economic and political power-holders (Garnham, 1998), or as reductionist (Dan Schiller, 2007). They emphasize the continuity of the information society (if there is one) from its industrial past, and its intact and even strengthened power structure.

The main dispute in question between these two strands of academic thinking is, at the top level, the validity of such a notion as information society, and, at the subordinating level, the justification for magic power of ICTs, the central symbol of information society designated by the information society theorists. Thus, the validity of the information society thesis can be judged by probing how much this new form of society resembles its precedents; in other words, by observing whether the metaphors, analogies, or comparisons can stand the test of a more scrutinized examination. Similarly, the element of truth of magic power of its information and communication technologies with the Internet in particular, can be testified, in a large measure, by tracing them back to printing and broadcasting technologies. Through a review of the thesis and anti-thesis of information society, this chapter argues their dispute can be methodologically enumerated on three questions: the existence of a fallacy of technological determinism and presentism, the distinction between information as a resource and information as a commodity, and the differentiation of an earlier age of technology and a later age. After that, I move onto the description of their interactions with various social actors: politics, market, and civil society.

4.1. Information Society Thesis and Anti-Thesis

Marx generalized the history of society as four forms: primitive-communal, slave-holding, feudal, capitalist, and socialist. He illuminated “the special laws that regulate the origin, existence, development and death” of each of them and its replacement by a higher one (cf. CJ Arthur, 1992: 14). These forms of society all experience an evolutionary process whereby quantitative change happens and a revolutionary process whereby qualitative change happens and through which the society is brought to its higher substitution. There are many open questions about these grand narratives of Marx and his collaborator Engels. Were the 1917 Russian Revolution and a subsequent Chinese Revolution essentially more of a nature of feudal restoration than a socialist achievement? Is the means of violence a suitable reservation to achieve changes? How do the ideas of Marx relate to the human nature? These questions remain open. However, there is no doubt that Marx in his work the Capital presented one of the most systematic critiques on capitalism, and what is overall in question in this chapter is whether the information society, positively proposed and appraised by the post-industrialists and many other like-minded theorists as a new form of society, has moved beyond capitalism and thus invalidated the critical conceptual framework established by Marx.
Bell disagreed with Marx’s insistence that a new form of society always rise internally from the residual of its precedent like the capitalist society sprouted from the ruins of feudal society. He claimed that a new social system “does not always arise necessarily within the shell of an old one but sometimes outside of it” (Bell, 1973: 378). He believed such was the case of a post-industrial society. He treated science and technology as independent of the social reality, and perceived them as an external but determining force that transformed capitalist/industrial society and lifted it onto the status of post-industrialism. Bell set the time frame for the validity of Marx’s analysis of Western capitalist society between 1750 and 1970. According to Bell, the validity of Marx’s analysis diminished both before 1750 since Marx based his division of various forms of society on a critique of capitalism and after 1970 because capitalism from then on has crystallized into a post-industrial society. According to Bell, this historic metamorphosis in Western society is “a far cry from the vision of The Communist Manifesto of 1848 and the student revolutionaries of 1968.”

Bell predicted the coming of post-industrial society both through distinguishing its five dimensions and exploring its historical analogies. The first dimension of post-industrial society is the “creation of a service economy” in which the majority of the labor force would shift from agriculture and manufacturing onto services and amenities such as health, education, recreation, and the arts. The second dimension is “the pre-eminence of the professional and technical class.” In the United States, this is witnessed in the fact that white-collar workers outnumbered blue-collar workers in 1956 and a sharp growth of professional and technical employment. The third dimension is “the primacy of theoretical knowledge.” It is used “for the purpose of social control and the directing of innovation and change.” Knowledge of theoretical nature acquires a central position in post-industrial society because of its ability to codify and abstract experience in varied areas.

A fourth dimension is “the planning of technology.” Only by opening up new technological frontiers, Bell believed, can a modern society avoid stagnation and maintain productivity. A fifth dimension is “the rise of a new intellectual technology” which is defined as “the substitution of algorithms (problem-solving rules) for intuitive judgments.” “These algorithms may be embodied in an automatic machine or a computer program or a set of instructions based on some statistical or mathematical formula.” Unlike the social science models of 19th and early 20th century which tend to oversimplify a complex world (Marxist system as a typical case), Bell believed that the intellectual technologies are invented to handle “organized complexity.” (Bell, 1973: 12-33)

Analogically, Bell gave prominence to the post-industrial society by comparing its features with those of the industrial and pre-industrial. In a pre-industrial society, “life is primarily a game against the nature” and “the labor force is engaged overwhelmingly in the extractive industries” like mining, fishing, forestry, and agriculture. In an industrial society, “life is a game against fabricated nature” and the labor force is heavily involved in the goods-producing activities where “the machine predominates, and the rhythms of life are mechanically become technical and rationalized.” In a services-based post-industrial society, where life is a game between persons, what constitutes the basis of productivity is not raw muscle power as does a pre-industrial society or energy as does an industrial society, but information. (ibid, p. 126-9)

Castells adopted the same thread of narration as Bell. This thread is the evolution from agrarian society (pre-industrial society), to industrial society, and then to
informational society (post-industrial society). The transitional marker between these forms of society is the modes of development, which are distinguished from the modes of production. The modes of production are “the rules for the appropriation, distribution, and uses of the surplus.” He observed that the twentieth century witnessed two predominant modes of production: capitalism under which the treatment of surplus is controlled by the capitalists and statism under which the treatment of surplus is controlled by the state. Based on a different axis, modes of development are “the technological arrangements through which labor works on matter to generate the product, ultimately determining the level and quality of surplus.” “Each mode of development is defined by the element that is fundamental in fostering productivity in the production process.”

Castells canonized the modes of development as indicators of the level of productivity and epochal changes. Analogically, in the agrarian mode of development, the main source of productivity improvement comes from “quantitative increases of labor and natural resources (particularly land) in the production process, as well as from the natural endowment of these resources.” In the industrial mode of development, productivity relies on “the introduction of new energy sources” and “the ability to decentralize the use of energy throughout the production and circulation processes.” In the informational mode of development, productivity depends on “the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbol communication.” (Castells, 1996: 16-17) According to Castells, these three modes of development featured what Turner concluded “the evolutionarily later always subsumes and includes the evolutionarily earlier.” In particular, Castells pinpointed the evolutionary feature between industrialism and informationalism. “Informationalism presupposes industrialism, as energy, and its associated technologies are still a fundamental component of all processes” (Castells, 2004: 8-9).

Essentially, Castells and Bell are methodologically of the same intellectual tradition. While Bell’s ambition is perhaps only confined to a critique of a rising communist ideology than the construction of a new form of society, Castells attempted to confirm this thread of history-telling, and his notion of network society, as an orthodox categorization of social evolution. Quoting Confucius at the opening of his The Rise of the Network Society, he indicated that the most innovative part of his work lies in the fact that he grasped a thread which links up the rest. Upon the publication of Castells’ trilogy, it has been followed by a tremendous amount of academic discussion. Information society school of thinking has been established as an important reference point among academics, and with the help of market and politics, “the dominant ideology of the current historical period” (Garnham, 2001: 129). Blessed with the advance of time and the richness of experience as a social activist, Castells presented a much more sophisticated literature about information society than his precursor Bell. His sophistication is manifest in the width of social scope and particularity of technological details. Both of their literature is considerably flawed in their technological determinism and presentism, though with different degrees.

Castells made Bell’s broad picture of society broader. He extended Bell’s focus of the West to include a wider array of cross-cultural cases and linked them up to his network society thesis. The collapse of Soviet Union is attributed to its failure to adapt itself to an informational mode of development of network society. The lift of China from impoverished poverty is due to its top down state-led project towards industrialism and informationalism and bottom up networking between domestic and overseas businessmen. The growing irrelevance of Africa is because of its being dropped out from the network. The European Union is developing itself into a healthy
network state. And above all, the United States will continue leading of the world through its unique university-industry complex highly conducive to innovation. In a highly dynamic way, Castells combined these cases tightly along the relationship between identity and networks.

Castells made Bell’s narrow focus on technology narrower by elaborating considerable technical details. He argued that for the first time in history new technology represented by microelectronics-based information technologies are able to gain an upper hand over traditional vertical-hierarchical social structure. Their almightiness, according to Castells, derives from three intricate features of networks: flexibility, scalability, and survivability, which constitute a new technological environment. A network is flexible because it can take different routes to achieve the same given goal, and scalable because its size can be expanded andshrunk with virtually no loss. A network works on a binary logic of inclusion and exclusion, and once connected, it is resistant against attack because it has multiple nodes but no center. These features, Castells argued, characterize the ICTs which then characterize a network society and allow it to fully deploy itself. By so doing, ICTs achieved what the wind-powered vessels and electricity grid failed to do – overcoming material limits.

Both Castells and Bell repudiated technological determinism but did not succeed in escaping from it. This is the first fallacy they commit in their information society thesis. Castells diluted the color of technological determinism which is more evident in Bell’s analysis. Bell believed that the single-minded determinism, economic or technological, in explaining social change, can be avoided by specifying the rotating axes to make distinctions and identifying “a primary logic within a given conceptual scheme” (Bell, 1973: 12). This methodology, he claimed, can forgo causality but emphasize significance. Nevertheless, as it turned out, the significance of certain technology was so overemphasized as to acquire decisive causal effect in bringing out social changes. Castells kept a greater distance from technological determinism than Bell by describing the emergence of network society as a “serendipitous coincidence” resulting from an intricate combination of various economic, social, political, and cultural factors at the right time and in the right place.

More concretely, Castells identified three independent processes whose interactions gave rise to a network society: “the crisis of industrialism, the rise of freedom-oriented social movements; and the revolution in information and communication technologies” (Castells, 2004: 22). In this process, the technological process started in the 1960s and continued into the 1990s, Internet after its origination in ARPANET was diffused and developed into a global network of free communication. The crisis of industrialism started in the 1970s when the Western world experienced a severe economic crisis and “the Soviet economy reached the point of quasi-stagnation” (ibid, p. 17). In the Western world, “corporations responded by shedding labor, putting pressure on wages, benefits, and job security, globalizing production and markets, stepping up research and development, investing in technology, and finding more flexible, efficient forms of management” (ibid, p. 15). Their efforts were encouraged politically by the UK Thatcher administration and the US Reagan administration through their clear mission to recapitalize capitalism.

As a result, capitalism (industrial capitalism) survived the crisis through a transition from industrial capitalism to informational capitalism. The Soviet Union (industrial statism), however, failed to cope with this transition and dismantled in the early 1990s, which also paved the way for the globalization of informational capitalism. The social
movements started in the late 1960s, dissolved into “more articulate movements” such as feminist movement and environmental movement in the 1970s, and brewed a global cultural climate owning three core values: the value of freedom and individual autonomy, of cultural diversity, and of ecological solidarity (ibid, p. 19). The movement sustained a freedom-oriented culture which is important for not only its participants but also for the technicians. Thus, these three processes, functioning often with a considerable degree of independence and sometimes with intersections, led to the rise of a network society. In this way, the qualitative change of technology is seemingly intended by Castells to be proven as a necessary condition, rather than a necessary and sufficient condition, for social changes.

It can be observed, however, Castells (and certainly Bell) did not circumvent the fallacy of technological determinism. A network society, Castells defined, “is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies” (ibid, p. 3). In order to shift to such a society, the only condition, that Castells is most confident of, and that is most recognizable and executable, is the preparation and diffusion of ICTs. Though Castells (ibid, p. 42) specified particularly that “technology can only yield its promise in the framework of cultural, organizational, and institutional transformations,’ he indicated that these surrounding conditions can take different forms as long as their networking capability is assured. For the political factor that contributed to the rise of network society in the context of the US, Castells contended that Thatcher and Reagan policy “was not an historical necessity, nor the only policy that could have restructured capitalism, and ensured its dynamic transition from industrial capitalism to informational capitalism” (ibid, p. 16)

An American commercial model of network society is not the only option, Castells maintained, and a Finnish welfare model is not at all a less advanced achievement than its earlier American precursor. Castells’ overemphasis on the importance of technology is more evidently manifest in his argument that once the ICTs are in position, their magic power would gain superiority over vertical-hierarchical organizations. This is clearly an indication of causal relationship. Upon their origin in the US, Castells’ logic claims, ICTs grow increasingly external to society. The society sometimes waits for the right technology to save it from backwardness, the way Europe was awakened by printing. Or vice versa, technology sometimes waits for the maturity of social conditions to shake up the world, as Internet did on the US. In either case, technology was assigned an axial role, while other social dimensions were positioned as revolving around this core of technology.

In addition to and connected with a fallacy of technological determinism, information society thesis is subject to another fallacy, presentism. Williams (2004: 432-48) illustrated three versions of presentism, each one more sophisticated than the earlier one. The first version simply ignores the past and regards the present “as a self-contained reality, as if there were no past realities that have shaped it.” The second version is that of Whig history that constructs “the record of the past as a track to the present, a narrative of events leading to the triumph of whatever is deemed most commendable today.” The third version of presentism “involves taking the categories and concerns of the present, shaking (or stirring) them with history, and adding the dimension of time to inquire into their origins.” The network society thesis did not reflect in any way the first version of presentism. It was, in a lesser degree, marked with the second version of presentism, because this new form of society “is hailed as the climax of inevitable technological progress toward more ubiquitous, more rapid, more portable, more miniaturized, (and) more powerful communication.”
In a larger degree, it was a reflection of the third version of presentism. Historians of technology, in their exact self-definition, are indulging this version of presentism by “applying the concept of technology to the past, especially the distant past.” Williams noticed that the term technology was absent in historical narratives and did not become commonplace until in the 1920s and 1930s. In a more radical way, he argued, compellingly, that “what is most intractably presentist about the whole enterprise of the history of technology is not the temptation to compose a Whiggish narrative of technological process, not the temptation to impose current concepts (such as the ‘network society’) back into times where they do not fit, but the assumption that ‘technology’ has any place in history at all.” Consequently, observed from the perspective of methodology, technological determinism and presentism are the two fallacies of information society thesis.

Some critical political economists, also closely involved in the debate on a cultural imperialism thesis, noticed other methodological flaws of the information society thesis and denied the emergence of a new society by attending the evidence of continuities. An important point of departure in their analysis was to distinguish between information as a resource and information as a commodity (Mosco, 1989; Dan Schiller, 2007). Such a distinction is of vital importance in telling whether we are moving from an industrial society to an information society as claimed by the post-industrialists or simply undergoing “a deepening and extending capitalism, with the incorporation of information into the commodity form” (Mosco, 1989: 25). Both Mosco and Dan Schiller reached the latter conclusion by pointing out this “basic conceptual flaw” manifest throughout the writings of the post-industrialists.

As a resource, information is a raw material whose different value from fossil fuel resources lies in the fact that it is inexhaustible, flexible and strategic (ibid, p. 22-7). When treating information as a resource, talking about a transition from industrial society to a post-industrial society makes sense. In this sense, “what steel and fossil fuels were to the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society, information is to the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial, service, or information society.” However, Mosco thought that the concept of information as a resource is too comprehensive to offer sufficient understanding about fundamental social changes, because basing social transition on the use of different resources such as steel and information ignores the transition on the social forms of resource organization.

He thus classified four possibilities through which resource can be socially organized: pure commons form, commons under government trusteeship, private property under individual ownership and management, and private property under stockholder ownership and corporate management. He took notice of the major shift from commons organization to private corporate ownership. Information society thesis meets its limits in explaining the ways information can be organized. As a commodity, information was claimed by capitalism as a new site of capital accumulation. To describe this commodification process of information, Mosco coined Pay-per Society as a substitute for the ill-fitted information society. Namely, we increasingly pay-per call, pay-per view, pay-per bit, etc. In this sense, no difference can be discerned between information and other commodities. Dan Schiller adopted a similar approach in thinking about information. He succinctly summarized the variations between a resource and a commodity:

A resource is something of actual or potential use. That is all. The soil, the sea, and the spectrum are resources. But all resources are not commodities. Only under particular
conditions can they be transformed into commodities. A resource is anything of use, anytime, anywhere, to anyone; but a commodity bears the stamp of society and of history in its very core…A commodity is a resource that is produced for the market by wage labor. (Dan Schiller, 2007: 6, 21)

This distinction is regarded as a starting-point for a fair understanding of the nature of information in contemporary society. Like Mosco’s proposal of a Pay-per Society, Dan Schiller hinted an information-commodity society, as a shorthand description for an extended version of capitalism and as an anti-thesis or substitute for the notion of information society. He contrasted the information society thesis with his anti-thesis. The information society thesis stated that “the value of information derives from its inherent attributes as resource”; its anti-thesis stated that “its value stems uniquely from its transformation into a commodity – a resource socially revalued and redefined through progressive historical application of wage labor and the market to its production and exchange” (ibid, p. 15-6). Information society thesis began with industrial society and asserted that it is being transcended; its anti-thesis began with capitalism and argued that it is not being transcended. Information society thesis presupposed that “information is intrinsically anomalous and information labor innately dichotomous with other forms of work”; its anti-thesis assumed that “information can be compared usefully with the vast range of other commodities whose production depends on common capitalist relations of production” (ibid, p. 20-21).

We escape neither from the agrarian nor from the industrial form of society, neither from the fight with the nature nor with the fabricated nature. Informational capitalism and industrial capitalism share a common hierarchical center-periphery structure. Castells’ introduction on the international division of labor is quite indicative of this structure. The labor is divided into four categories: producers of high value (based on informational labor) which concentrate in North America, Western Europe and Japan; producers of high volume (based on lower-cost labor) where China is especially important; producers of raw materials (based on natural resources) where oil and gas supplies are crucial; and redundant producers (that are reduced to devalued labor) where there is little capital, few resources, unstable government and poor infrastructure (Castells, 1996: 147, see also Webster, 2006: 103). Metaphorically speaking, the flow of producer of high value is frequently from the lower reach of the river to the upper reach. The direction can be from rural areas to urban areas or from developing countries to developed countries. The same is true with the flow of commodities of high value, or resources of high entropy, or, simply put, wealth.

Combined with the information-commodity thesis, a thermodynamic interpretation of the flow of resources provides convincing theoretical explanation for another anti-thesis: Limited Earth Society, a society in which human beings gain increasing awareness about the importance of sustainable development. It also assumes that environmental problems would start from developing countries and overwhelm the world. Air-conditioners, refrigerators, Television sets, microwave ovens, electricity, bridges, highways, skyscrapers, vehicles, recorders, computers, mobile phones, iphones, desks, books, and newspapers (etc.), all essential components of the urban life, are all attributable to basically three types of resources: water, mineral resources such as coal and oil, and forests (Tian, 2006). Putting aside a colonial era of brutal robbery of wealth and labor, in the industrial age, a typical exchange of commodity is TV sets produced in the upper reach against oil in the lower reach. Put thermodynamically, in the industrial age, low-entropic resources (water, mineral
resources, and forests) in the lower reach of river flow to the upper reach of river in exchange for high-entropic resources (TV sets, vehicles).

The digital form of information exchange is not subject to the thermodynamic laws, but the rule of the industrial age remains, or information as commodity matters. The early movers in the informational phase of capitalism, possessing meanwhile the rule-making status in international organizations such as World Trade Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, etc. and the highest capability to use force, are now lifted to a self-acclaimed more advanced form of society. Through the commodification of information, the earlier defining line between the lower reach of river and upper reach is basically kept intact, though the flow of resources acquires an additional possibility. Software, banking, financing, advertising, stock market exchange information, and news service, etc., maintained by an international mechanism, are now exchanged for TV sets outsourced to producers at the lower reach. A newly acquired feature of this era is the increased exchange between non-thermodynamic resources (commoditized information) for thermodynamic resources (TV sets). As long as the society moves ahead in the capitalist logic, the exploitation of the nature won’t stop and the hierarchical structure won’t willingly retreat.

Many heralds of information society thesis fail to pay due attention to information-commodity dimension. Their attention is solely focused on the fact that information is not subject to the laws of thermodynamics. Therefore, Cleveland’s (cf. Dan Schiller, 2007: 7) claim that information is “expandable, compressible, substitutable, transportable, leaky, shareable” is groundless. Toffler’s summary of the characteristics of knowledge, its being “non-rival, intangible, non-linear, relational, portable, and compressible” (2006: 101), shares the same conceptual flaw. His differentiation between knowledge, characterized by “the more we use, the more we create,” and oil, characterized by “the more we use, the less we have left,” is misleading. His prediction that “the arrival of the Third Wave knowledge-based economy brings with it the best chance yet of – once and for all – breaking the back of global poverty” (ibid, p. 287) is even more naïve. For better understanding, Tian (2006) changed this oil versus knowledge into the classic apple versus story metaphor. Under the capitalist logic based on a lasting exploitation of nature and a perpetuating hierarchical global trade structure, he explained the process and outcome of knowledge economy: “I use my story to exchange your apple, or my knowledge to exchange your oil; in this way, my knowledge or story becomes my wealth, and your oil becomes my oil.” Knowledge is not wealth until it is cycled through this commodification system.

He concluded that in order to join the global food chain and generally from the bottom of the pyramid, underdeveloped countries have to provide resources for the developed countries, meanwhile often receive rubbish from them. Thus, interpreted through the thermodynamic law, it becomes easy to understand the deterioration of environment and deforestation in the lower reach countries or areas. In spite of the optimism of the entry into a digital world, the demand for bleached eucalyptus market pulp has seen an annual growth rate of 7.4% , from 2 MM tons in 1980 to 10 MM tons in 2005 (Vianna et al, 2006). The Brazilian Aracruz Celulose Company has been responsible for around 30% of the global supply of bleached eucalyptus pulp, dominantly for EU and US market, in the production of printing and writing, tissue, and high value-added specialty papers. Despite its being included in Dow Jones Sustainability Index in 2006, the company’s plantation activities have greatly endangered biodiversity in the original rainforests, and the native indigenous communities. Yet the company, with 56%
of its voting shares controlled by US and EU shareholders and most of the rest Brazilian state, was able to launch a campaign against the indigenous communities in their land disputes.

From a thermodynamic view, the final outcome is a quick replacement of cultural diversity by materialism, and a quick shrink of natural diversity by economic activities. Then “the world will become the resources of the rich and the earth will become the planet of rubbish” (Tian, 2006). In this Limited Earth Society versus information society division, “who you are” and “where you are” are indicators of great importance to survive this vicious cycle, but will become irrelevant as time goes by. The one-dimensional mode of development is based on the assumption that there will always be new resources to be developed and new market to be capitalized but this assumption contradicts the most basic fact that we have only one earth on which resources are limited. The future of human being should not be made dependent on the future of technology whose capability to solve problems remains an open question.

The information society thesis thus includes the post-industrial society, network society etc., while its anti-thesis includes pay-per society, information commodity society, limited earth society, etc. While subscribing to Mosco and Dan Schiller’s view of distinguishing information as a resource from information as a commodity, I heighten, in the next section, the importance of making another distinction between a short earlier period of communication technology and a later period, by posing Lessig’s acute observations of Internet, as well as those of some critical political economists, against Pool’s argument for the inherent freedom of technology on the freedom of speech. With such a distinction, I argue that Castells’ assertiveness on the emergence of a new society may be in some measure misinformed by the illusions of an earlier stage of Internet. The history of communication technology calls into question Castells’ insistence that “we have created a machine which is dynamic, full of opportunities but is controlled by no one” (cf. Van Dijk, 1999: 136). Communication technology has always been used by political and market forces for their benefits but often against central human rights values, except for a short earlier stage of trial and testing. Next chapter depicts how the political confrontations of various forces intensified over internet governance vis-à-vis some universal values.

4.2. The Role of State and Market in Freedom of Expression

To tackle this topic, I follow a thread of technological breakthroughs and bring together the ideas of Ithiel De Sola Pool and Lawrence Lessig, among others. The improvement of communication technology is a history of uneven and speed-up development. Gutenberg’ metal movable types were invented in the 15th century. Newspapers and magazines were born in the 19th century. An enormous growth and expansion of communication technologies was one of the central aspects of the 20th century: the first three quarters of it welcomed film, radio, television, cable television; the last quarter embraced the prosperity of the Internet, which is acclaimed as the most evident feature of the information society. Pool published his Technologies of Freedom on Free Speech in an Electronic Age in 1983; Lessig published his Code and Other Laws in the Cyberspace in 1999. Based on a careful observation of the two books and some others, I establish an analytical framework which divides the development of each communication technology, namely printing, broadcasting, and the Internet, roughly into an early stage and a later one. This provides convenience to present various views on freedom of expression and the role of the state/market.
From early printing to later printing

In terms of printing, including its early age and the later one, Pool held that the printing in the US is truly free under the protection of the First Amendment. This is explicitly articulated in the beginning paragraph of the first chapter, in which he wrote that “for five hundred years a struggle was fought, and in a few countries won, for the right of people to speak and print freely, unlicensed, uncensored, and uncontrolled” (1983: 1). He failed to tell the fundamental difference between the early printing and the later one. He did notice that a few wire services serve one-to-a-city newspapers in the US and the number of competitive newspapers is declining, but he was still of an opinion that the freedom of publishing remains intact despite the growth in large-scale publishing (p. 12). He believed that this is the domain that is truly governed by the First Amendment. Lessig, an American constitution lawyer, was able to tell a fundamental difference between them. In the early age, he noted, “the cost of a printing press was low, the readership was slight, and anyone (within reason) could become publisher – and in fact an extraordinary number did” (1999: 183). The press at that time “did not comprise large organizations of private interests, with millions of readers associated with each organization,” and it did not resemble the present New York Times or the Wall Street Journal. It is the market, he maintained, that has erased the architecture of freedom inherent in the print press.

On the American case, Pool did not give sufficient attention to the role the market played in subverting freedom of expression. This blindness to the negative influence of market is consistent in his book. However, Pool has an acute awareness about the negative role of the state. He attributed the prevailing freedom of American press to its successful rejection “of various British attempts to impose government authority over the press” by upholding the First Amendment. On the British case, Pool devoted one section of the second chapter of his book to the analysis of state censorship and control. He accounted four ways of control the British government once imposed on the printing press: (1) attempting to limit printing to the monopoly of the Stationers’ Company, (2) requiring licenses for printers to publish, (3) imposing taxes on newsprint, on ads, and on newspapers themselves, and (4) prosecuting the critics of British government for criminal libel (p. 14-5). These practices were rejected in America. Pool’s examination is broadly based on the history of British press from beginning of 16th century to early 19th century. Nevertheless, Pool’s examination is as partial and selective as his handling of the American case.

Curran and Seaton (2003) agreed that those state practices oppressed the freedom of speech in Britain, but they disagreed that arrival of the free market has reserved press freedom. They continued from where Pool had stopped, and argued that the period around the mid-19th century, when the market advertising set in, “did not inaugurate a new era of press freedom and liberty; it established instead a new system of press censorship more effective than anything that had gone before.” They found that “market forces succeeded where legal repression had failed in conscripting the press to the social order” (2003: 5). The high barrier of launching cost is one way to achieve this. They noticed, for instance, the total cost of establishing a national weekly on a profitable basis in 1837 was under a thousand pounds; however by 1886, the estimated start-up cost of a new London daily was 50,000 pounds (cf. Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 4). Herman and Chomsky quoted Curran and Seaton’s analysis of the British newspaper as evidence to how investment and ownership of the media oppressed freedom of speech. This is one of the five essential ingredients of the propaganda model they have defined. The other four ingredients consist of advertising, the reliance on their sources, flak, and anticommunism. Altogether, they contribute to the argument that “the press under market is as undemocratic as it under state.”
From early broadcasting to later broadcasting
Like the fate of printing in the US, broadcasting also had a short golden period of freedom at its early age which sparked imaginations of democracy. In the 1920s, when amateur enthusiasts and educators were pioneering the new wireless technology, they also envisioned a virtual community in which invisible messages could travel freely of the interference of material forces. But businesses quickly smelled the potential profits of controlling the technology and forced governments to open radio to commerce. Governments either took complete control of the new technology or shared it with businesses, while the early pioneers were left little. (Mosco, 2004: 27).

Pool (1983: 110) briefly referred to this period in a short paragraph. In retrospect, he observed that at the time there were several options for the organization of radio broadcasting. “It could have been set up as a government monopoly, a common carrier, a regulated commercial activity, or an unregulated market activity like publishing.” (p. 108) He lamented that of the four possible options, only the last one, which he regarded as correct, was not considered. In the name of spectrum scarcity, broadcasting in the US ended up as a regulated commercial activity. Pool believed that spectrum scarcity had never existed and quite on the contrary it is the state intervention that resulted in scarcity. “The scheme of granting free licenses for use of a frequency band, though defended on the supposition that scarce channels had to be husbanded for the best social use, was in fact what created a scarcity” and “clearly it was policy, not physics, that led to the scarcity of frequencies” (p. 141). A market distribution from the start, through auction, sale or lease, should be the best option, and Pool attributed the overlook of this option to “the failure of Congress and the courts to understand the character of the new technologies” (p. 3-4). Pool concluded that the regulation already imposed on broadcasters is unconstitutional and contradictory to the tradition inherited from John Milton.

Lessig shared Pool’s view that it was unconstitutional for the US government to intervene at the excuse of spectrum scarcity at a time when technology was already mature enough for an alternative that is both constitutional and conductive to freedom of expression. Lessig argued that it is actually possible to develop the radio technology in the 1920s into something similar to the early Internet, were an alternative broadcasting architecture, spread spectrum, adopted, instead of the current architecture, spectrum allocation. In that case, “everyone could be a broadcaster” (1999: 184). The difference between Lessig and Pool is that Lessig saw both the state and the market as potential threats to the broadcasting and Internet architecture. The result of the relaxation of radio market ownership rules through the American 1996 Telecommunications Act led to the disappearance of local news, diminishment of musical variety, and an increase of commercialism. The worry that the same thing could occur on Television made three million Americans protest through various forms against a similar relaxation on the overall media ownership (McChesney, 2004).

From early Internet to later Internet
Pool wrote at a time when there were only 1200 publicly available on-line data bases and 120 bulletin boards on the UNIX and the Arpanet systems in the US. He pointed out the transforming nature of these electronic networks. He observed that “the electronic networks that are now emerging alongside telephone, radio, and television, unlike those older electronic devices, are not just parallel complements to the print media; they are actually transforming print” (1983: 198). Pool intuitively realized the revolutionary effects of the new communication technologies by envisioning some basic characteristics of the cyberspace. “Soon most published information will be
disseminated electronically.” (ibid, p. 224) He predicted that networked computers will be the printing presses of the twenty first century. As a whole, Pool saw what he believed the genuine freedom of the printing press, the deviation of broadcast regulation from the First Amendment, and the opportunity of coming back to the original freedom in an electronic age.

He came to the conclusion that the gene of technology is inherently free and the state should take the blame for the inconsistency with the First Amendment in the case of broadcast. And the state would still take the blame if it does not give full power to the market in the future. His efforts to apply the negative freedom of the First Amendment persisted in the book. This persistent fixing on the role of state and neglect of that of market resulted in Pool’s failure to observe the changes in American printing and his confusion on why electronic networks offered a renewed opportunity. That is arguably why Pool used the two adverbs “fortunately and strangely” to comment on the reversal of the history. “Fortunately and strangely,” wrote Pool, “as electronic advances further, another reversal is now taking place, towards growing decentralization and toward fragmentation of the audience of the newest media” (ibid, p. 5).

The reason for this renewal of opportunity, according to Lessig, may well be that the development of Internet is still in its early stage. Lessig wrote in 1999, a time many utopian ideas about the Internet prevailed. He was able to alert us of the potential negative role of the market in transforming the Internet as it did with the printing press. He warned us of the likelihood that an alliance between government and commerce may be formed in the future to control the Internet: “a future of control in large part exercised by technologies of commerce, backed by the rule of law” (Lessig, 1999: x). The insight of Lessig lies in the fact that he noticed made a parallel analogy between the printing and the Internet. Considering the precedent that the market had changed printing into large private interests, it would be naïve to assume that that would happen on the Internet. He wrote that the changes in the architecture of the Internet which will result in an increase of regulability will emerge even if government does nothing. “They are the by-product of changes made to enable e-commerce” (ibid, p. 100).

Both Pool and Lessig had their ideas traced back to the early thinkers on the freedom of expression. Pool went back to John Milton twice to find roots for his argument that the state is the enemy of the freedom of speech. When referring to the Congress’s efforts to solve signal interference by imposing licensing on transmitters, Pool commented that it was “breaching a tradition that went back to John Milton against requiring licenses for communicating” (1983: 3). Lessig traced the freedom of expression back to another influential political philosopher John Stuart Mill. He rightly pointed out that the modern libertarians have taken Mill’s ideas literally. In the opinion of Lessig, Mill’s ideas should be read flexibly and methodologically:

Mill’s method is important, and it should be our own. It asks, What is the threat to liberty, and how can we resist it? It is not limited to asking, What is the threat to liberty from government? It understands that more than government can threaten liberty, and that sometimes this something more can be private rather than state action. Mill was not so concerned with the source. His concern was with liberty. (Lessig, 1999: 85)

Here it does not matter whom, Mill or Milton, Pool and Lessig had traced their ideas back to. Pool used a static way for an interpretation; while Lessig went beyond the context for an interpretative method which he named “translation”. It is this method of
translation that constitutes one of the fundamental methodological differences between Pool and Lessig. After piling up a series of questions on how we can protect liberty, free thought, self-determination in a cyberspace where the architectures of control are managed as much by the government as by the private sector, Lessig made clear that “the answer is not in the knee-jerk anti-government rhetoric of our past,” and “reality is harder than fiction; governments are necessary to protect liberty, even if also sufficient to destroy it” (1999: x-xi). This way of translating philosophical origins is an essential change we should adapt to for a brighter cyberspace. This method of translations can be applied in the concrete legal context. It aims to choose in a way that is faithful to the choices of the past, to translate the commitments of the past into a fundamentally different context (ibid, p. 109).

A comparison of Pool and Lessig’s ideas made three clarifications. Firstly, similar to the scientific principle in physics that “nature abhors vacuum,” medium also abhors vacuum. It is true all media forms from printing, to broadcasting, and then to the Internet experienced a golden period of genuine freedom at their early launching time, but once they are established as a mature technology ready for any profiting opportunity or political purpose, power would naturally fill in. Secondly, a media system single-handedly controlled either by the state or by the market won’t guarantee the freedom of speech. A cooperation model between the two provides mixed evidence. It may result in a worsened situation evident in the case of broadcasting in the US, as well as in the national media samples of China and Russia, but it can also immensely improve the situation as the emerging European dual broadcasting system shows. The digital convergence between telecommunications and broadcasting opens door to a new governance model.

Under this new trend, the negative role used to be played by state is increasingly picked up by the market. The landmark merging between AOL and Time Warner in 2000 ridded us of a large element of the utopian thinking about the Internet and declared the end of its early age. “It hammers the last nail in the coffin of the argument that the Internet will democratize the media by giving ordinary citizens the ability to compete in the marketplace against the media giants.” (cf. De Bens, 2007: 16) A flexible application of the methodology of translation leads to the preference of a public-private cooperation model which remain contested and open for enrichment from more cross-cultural experiences.

4.3. Information Society Thesis Moved to Policy

The 1980s

In the economic scenario, the accelerating advancement in the arena of satellite and computer technology had, on the one hand, improved the capability of transnational corporations, thus enabling them to sidestep international organizations for global operations; on the other hand, this information arena was selected as a new site of scratching profits. In the political domain, Japan started as early as 1972 the “Information Society Plan” and by 1985, it had achieved a second initiative—the “Long Term Basic Plan.” Reagan’s ascendance in power in 1980 commenced an ambitious project of the recapitalization of capitalism. In order to revitalize economic growth, a congressional committee declared that “computers, telecommunications, and the services which grow out of or depend on those technologies…are the critical industries for continued economic growth” (cf. Dan Schiller, 2007: 37).

Following the lead of the UK Thatcher administration, European Union also embarked on the same project towards deregulation, privatization, and liberalization.
The telecommunications area in EU had come to be almost totally liberalized since 1984 when the Green Paper *Television without Frontiers* was issued (Servaes, 2003: 11). Imitating the Japanese and American model of economic development and in a fanciful hope of leapfrog, China recruited in 1984 the information sector into its great opening-up (read: capitalist) experiment under the slogan of “developing information resource, serving the course of modernization” and two years later, in March 1986, a national long-term one billion Euro technology plan, “863 Plan” (named after the initiating year and month) was launched for the purpose of improving advanced science and technology especially those relating to information revolution and information technology.

Against such a backdrop, information society thesis experienced a conspicuous shift from the academic circle (as represented by Bell) to the policy domain. The works by the prophets of information society thesis in this decade fall into two main categories: populist works such as Alvin Toffler’s (1980) *The Third Wave* and Yoneji Masuda’s (1981) *The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society*, and officially commissioned research outcomes such as Simon Nora’s (1980) *The Computerization of Society: A Report to the President of France* (commissioned, as the title indicates, by the French government), Marc Porat’s (1984) *The Information Economy: Definition and Measurement* (commissioned by the American government), and Ian MacIntosh’s (1986) *Sunrise Europe* (commissioned by the European Commission) (O’Siochru, 2004: 205).

For the occurrences in the 1980s, an additional note should be given to Toffler’s *The Third Wave*. Toffler’s preaching on how to transition from an industrial to information society has covered “innumerable universities,” “the US Congress,” “corporate leaders,” and “presidents and prime ministers” (Toffler, 2006: xix). This is particularly the case with China. *The Third Wave* was translated into Chinese in 1983, and touched the souls of one generation of Chinese intellectuals and politicians who were at the time tired of political ideology and eager to seek new way to surpass the West. The agrarian-industrial-information transitional rhetoric offered by information society theorists and simplified by Toffler in vivid metaphors landed in China just in time and saved much trouble for the communists-transformed-capitalists to maintain their legitimacy to rule after the demise of statism in 1978. The third wave promised that for the first time in history the developing nations and developed ones are standing on the same starting point. Toffler’s popularity in China in the 1980s had reached to such a degree that he was enlisted by *People’s Daily*, the central propagating organ of Chinese Communist Party, as one of 50 foreigners that most significantly affected the modern Chinese history, along with others as diverse as Karl Marx, Richard Nixon, and Marie Curie.

**The 1990s and 2000s**

This shift remains an ongoing process in the 1990s and 2000s. At the academic level, post-Marxist scholar Castells presented his information age trilogy which was heralded by scholars as diverse as Anthony Giddens, Peter Hall, Alain Touraine, and Krishan Kumar (Van Dijk, 1999). Some uncommitted scholars to Bell’s post-industrialism were eventually persuaded by Castells’ insights into seriously considering the arrival of a new form of society. Some suggested that Castells’ work should be regarded as the starting point of “really serious efforts to produce an adequate theoretical understanding about the character of the information society as a qualitatively new stage of societal development” and from then on “the analysis of the social consequences of the ongoing digital revolution has gained a legitimate position also within the academic social science” (Kasvio, 2001: 20).
On the political agenda, numerous documents were issued and actions executed to embrace the information society, most of these are extensions of the information policy of the last decade. In 1993, US Vice President Al Gore installed National Information Infrastructure. In 1994, he introduced a more ambitious project of Global Information Infrastructure at the first World Telecommunication Development Conference. The same year, in 1994, Japan started its Master Plan for the development of information structure. In 2000, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori announced “e-Japan Strategy.” Now Japan has been striving for a ubiquitous information society for 2010. In 1993, China declared its own version of information superhighway, the Golden Bridge Project. In the context of its neoliberal WTO accession in 2001, China became the first country to set up a national information index measuring with such indicators as household penetration rates for television and internet connection (Zhao, 2007: 98).

The EU case deserves a more careful attention. Preceded by such labels such as “wired society” or “broadband networks” in the 1980s, information society discourse made inroads into European Commission’s official White Paper Growth, Competitiveness and Employment in 1993, declaring that “a new ‘information society’ is emerging in which the services provided by information and communication technologies (ICTs) underpin human activities” (cf. O’Siochru, 2004: 206). The White Paper firmly put information society at the centre of European policy-making (ibid), though in essence it tilted towards neo-Keynesian approach (Servaes, 2003: 12). In 1994, it was followed by a more neo-liberal Bangemann Report as well as its action plan which focused on “the issues of liberalization of telecommunications and the primacy of the private sector in the development of an information society” (ibid). In 1995, a high-level expert group and an Information Society Forum were founded to build the European information society for all, and in 1997 another document The Social and Labor Market Dimension of the Information Society was released (ibid).

As Servaes observed, these EU official documents embody “an oscillation between broader social concerns and a more technology and market-oriented focus” (ibid). Moving into the 21st century, EU is still at pains in shaping a coherent information society policy which would be both inclusive and competitive. This frustration clearly marked EU’s position on Internet Governance at WSIS, shifting from a private leadership model in 2003 to a public-private cooperation model in 2005. It triggered a major confrontation between EU and US at the Tunis phase of WSIS. It was yet another classic example of a large European continent, probably on a healthy track towards sincere pursuit of democratic governance after surviving two world wars and a cold war, was (arguably) ironically taken hostage by a state-led capitalism of China and market-led capitalism of the US. This swinging back and fro of European information policy, however, should be read as a hesitation in the ways to construct information society and not at all a suspicion of it. The European Council endorsed the information society thesis by claiming rather bluntly that “we are at present undergoing a fundamental transformation: from an industrial society to the information society” (cf. Kasvio, 2001: 19).

Nicholas Negroponte, another futurist sharing with Toffler equally assertive tone about the future and strong emphasis on reaching the politicians and the mass, stole Toffler’s thunder in the mid 1990s around the world by publishing Being Digital, denouncing the stupidity of age of atoms and celebrating the superiority of an age of bits. He launched the One Laptop per Child project in 2005 at WSIS and the project is still grasping worldwide media attention. The project itself (with its target on
children), many WSIS participants’ hysteria towards it, and the role of UN in it gave testimony to the fact that information society thesis (with its narrow focus on ICTs) has turned into mantra. In 2006, Toffler regained his position as a more affecting preacher by publishing with his wife Heidi Toffler Revolutionary Wealth. Decades of green movement, feminist movement and their earlier precedent, the working class movement, did not produce any influence on Toffler, who argued, fruitlessly, that world poverty would be completely removed by the new information technology revolution.

In a combined academic/political perspective, it is unreasonable to dismiss Toffler and Negroponte as minors that don’t deserve any serious academic attention. These belittling voices are represented by Webster and Garnham. Webster (2006: 35) commented that Toffler and Negroponte “merely produce bad books: intellectually slight, derivative, analytically inept and naïve on almost every count,” although he admitted that these “paperback speculations capture the largest audiences.” Garnham (1998: 97), in a similar way, regarded them as “straw men” and their works “the juvenile apercu.” What Toffler and Negroponte lose on the academic value in their works, they get back on their tremendous influence upon politicians and the mass readers across the world. It is, in terms of the ability to influence politics and to reach the mass audience rather than in terms of academic value, that Toffler and Negroponte’s works should be given primary attention.

In a letter to the Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich who proposed to digitalize the Library of Congress, Negroponte preached in a mythical, assertive, metaphorical tone. “Dear Newt,” he wrote,

> Your support of the digital age is deeply appreciated. As we move from a world of atoms to one of bits, we need leaders like you explaining that this revolution is a big one, maybe a 10.5 on the Richter scale of social change. Alvin and Heidi Toffler are dandy advisers; good for you for listening to them! The global information infrastructure needs a great deal of bipartisan cooperation, if only to help (read: force) other nations to deregulate and privatize their telecommunications. As you reach out across the world to evangelize the information age, people will listen. (cf. Mosco, 2004: 73)

In this correspondence, Negroponte expressed his approval of Tofflers, and attempted to convince Newt of the necessity to spread worldwide the trend of deregulation and privatization. He denounced the library as “a giant dumpster full of atoms” and would like to see it moving into a world of bits.

**Information society thesis as a dominant ideology**

This trend of merging between information society thesis and policy-making started from 1980s, overwhelmed the world in the 1990s, crystallized into a twice-phased WSIS at the dawn of the 21st century, being transformed into “the favored legitimating ideology for the dominant economic and political power-holders” (Garnham, 1998: 97). At the end of the 1980s, Herbert Schiller (1989: 309) was able to write that the long-brewing catchwords such as “information age” and “information society” achieved global acceptance. For the same decade, Siochru observed that the policy orientation of building information society had put the cart before the horse. Namely, means of development were confused with ends of development. “The corporate-driven modernist notion that technological innovation would solve social problems took hold in the sector, but reality was the subjection of technological development to the pursuit of profits irrespective of the impact on social development and inequalities” (O’Siochru, 2004: 205).
The dismantling of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the political changes in Eastern Europe sent a misperceived signal of the confirmation of correctness of informational mode of development, and removed the strongest political barrier for its world expansion. Thus, it did not come in surprise that, under a winning mood of capitalist superiority in the 1990s and 2000s, an ill-defined information society thesis would move further on the political agenda to be turned into a mantra to serve narrow market interests. Thanks to a strong alliance between the state, the market and the media, a formidable and oppressive mechanism of discourse takes shape. It is becoming increasingly commonplace for us to come across an enormous amount of ridicules measuring the backwardness and advancement of a civilization, a nation, a region, a culture, a religion, or an individual.

Hence, we read from the information society theorists and our daily media discourse that a certain country is ahead of another country, overall or in certain field, for certain years; that a certain country lags behind another country in the transition from agrarian society to industrial society; that a certain country is still struggling in the conflicts between the first and second wave while another between the second and third; that a certain civilization is not conducive to the modernity or post-modernity; that a certain person is speaking the words of the atomic age while others living in the virtual world of bits. This is a mechanism of a one-directional evolutionary view whose Chinese metaphorical name is “the logic of a ghostdom ruler” (Ke, 2005). The ghostdom ruler logic believes that each societal form of human society, as well as each idea of human individual, is marked with a scale in this ruler. This logic regards that an increase in the reading of the ruler means a progress made from backwardness to advancement or from primitivism to modernity. This ruler is believed to be able to “transcend cultures, geographies, ethnicities and all the other aspects of society” (ibid).

The view results from scientific fundamentalism which assumes the existence of an objective reality external to all human civilizations. Such a fundamentalist view believes science can capture this objective reality. With a blind faith of the magic power of science and technology, the agrarian – industrial – informational mode of development is essentially an expression of scientific fundamentalism, which exaggerates the rationality of human being whose knowledge is confined by various localities such as history. In fact, as the Fourth (Chinese) Science and Culture Conference noted, in spite of its superior position, modern science in the common sense is just a hegemonic expression of one of numerous forms of local knowledge. One’s knowledge about the world is confined both by his limited capability as a human and by the cultural, ethnical, and geographical context he is born. The Introductory Note to the Science Agenda-Framework for Action (UNESCO. World Conference on Science, 1999) cautions us against exaggerating the role of modern science by stating that “modern science does not constitute the only form of knowledge, and closer links need to be established between this and other forms, systems and approaches to knowledge, for their mutual enrichment and benefit.” The introductory note specifically pinpoints:

Traditional societies, many of them with strong cultural roots, have nurtured and refined systems of knowledge of their own, relating to such diverse domains as astronomy, meteorology, geology, ecology, botany, agriculture, physiology, psychology and health. Such knowledge systems represent an enormous wealth. Not only do they harbor information as yet unknown to modern science, but they are also expressions of other ways of living in the world, other relationships between society and nature, and other approaches to the acquisition and
construction of knowledge. Special action must be taken to conserve and cultivate this fragile and diverse world heritage, in the face of globalization and the growing dominance of a single view of the natural world as espoused by science. A closer linkage between science and other knowledge systems is expected to bring important advantages to both sides.

To sum up, the information society thesis supported by science fundamentalism and by market and political forces combine to produce a world event: WSIS. This is a continuing process from the birth of capitalism, reminded by critical political economists. Without such consciousness, WSIS was from Mars. With it, WSIS was landed on earth. The information society thesis was heavily endorsed by the politicians and business sector at WSIS. The terming of “the World Summit on the Information Society” is sufficient enough in approving the arrival of a new society. It offered a world ceremony for the market and political forces to conjure up and strengthen the myths about information society and its central symbol – the Internet. Confronted with mounting pressures exercised by various forms of inequalities, politicians and market forces need these myths more than ever before. The gloomier the reality looks, the more reliant these political and market forces become on new promises. As discussed in the next chapter, they formed the first and the third forces of WSIS political debate.

4.4. Information Society Anti-Thesis Moved to Grassroots

As it is important to remember that information society is in essence an information-commodity society, it is also important to note that transnational civil society movements are an outgrowth of the working class movements in the earlier time. The working class movements, with widely different national versions and divergent international alignments, politically led to communist regimes like Soviet Union and China (relying more on peasants than on workers) which seemed more like feudal restorations than socialist implementation, worse than the regimes they replaced. Nevertheless, the civil society movements, such as green movement and feminist movement, were born in such a historical background, though they differed from the working class movement in many aspects. A central aspect of difference is that these civil society movements (increasingly transnational) do not have an interest in taking over the state and they adhere to the principle of nonviolence. Another key difference is that they draw a clear line both with the power represented by state and market. “They were the affirmation of a culture of personal freedom and social autonomy, both vis-à-vis capitalism and statism, challenging the conservative establishment as well as the traditional left” (Castells, 2004: 18).

Feminist movement, green movement, human rights movement, and the media reform movement in question in this thesis are all concrete articulations of transnational civil society movements. They overlap in some central values such as participatory democracy, social justice, and diversity. The world summits preceding WSIS were predominantly tackling women, green, and human rights issues. Hans Klein (2005: 4) summarized ten world summits (though some don’t carry the title of world summit) held since 1992: 1992 Earth Summit, 1993 Human Rights Summit, 1994 Population Summit, 1995 Social Summit, 1995 Women’s Summit, 1996 Habitat II, 2001 World Summit against Racism, 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, and 2003/2005 WSIS. All the nine world summits before WSIS are concerned with urgent issues to be dealt with. WSIS was deliberately labeled as different in that it would be about the future. This preconditioned tone planted the seed of confrontation between civil society groups and the state/market power-holders because the future has always been steered by the latter power-holders who are used to designing a blueprint of the
power. They may be more willing to lend themselves to cooperation with civil society
groups on urgent problems but are less so in terms of designing the future.

The starting point of modern environmental movement is marked on 22 April 1970,
when 20 million Americans went to the main streets to demonstrate against
environmental problems ranging from pollution, oil spills, and pesticide. Within the
Anglo-Saxon cultural geography, the intellectual roots for environmental movement
can be traced back to 4 July 1845, when Henry Thoreau (1817-1862) moved to
Walden Pond, and through his writings, he became a prophet for ecological ideas.
Outside the Anglo-Saxon tradition, however, the thinking on the harmony between
nature and human beings has its origins in the times of some Chinese philosophers
such as Confucius (551-479 BC) and Zhuang Zi (around 400 BC). The latter’s
argument went to such a radical degree that he believed men and trees are born equal
in his essay “Human Beings in the World.” The social activism on environment was a
response to the logic of capitalism. The free exploitation of Asian forests by British
colonialists through its East India Company, for instance, lasted for half a century
before 1865 when the first Indian Forest Act was introduced to mark the so-called
new era of “scientific management.” This scientific way of forest management,
however, is an “industrial-materialist viewpoint of capitalistic forestry” which
“converts biodiversity into money and destroys the rest as weeds and waste” (Shiva,

There have been at least three international attempts to deal with environmental issues.
The first one was the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in
Stockholm on 5-16 June 1972. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
was founded then. The next one was the United Nations Conference on Environment
and Development (Río Summit, Earth Summit) held in Río de Janeiro on June 3-14
1992. It was attended by 178 governments, 2400 NGO representatives, and 10000
on-site journalists. It adopted two conventions The United Nations Framework
Convention on Climate Change and The Convention on Biological Diversity. It was
agreed not to “carry out any activities on the lands of indigenous peoples that would
cause environmental degradation or that would be culturally inappropriate” (cf.
Wikipedia, Earth Summit).

Most of the subsequent UN world summits bear the mark of this conference. In the
human rights area, for instance, the World Conference on Human Rights held in
Vienna on 14-25 June 1993 recognized the right to a healthy environment. In the
Feminist movement area, the Fourth United Nations’ Conference on Women held in
Beijing on 4-15 September 1995 initiated development projects on environment and
gender. In the media reform movement area, the Canadian Secretary-General of this
conference Maurice Strong endorsed the participation of environmental NGOs in the
WSIS process in Geneva/Tunis in 2003/2005 under the umbrella Environment and
ICTs. This trend has been continuing at the third international attempt in handling
environmental issues in 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The media reform movement is historically and horizontally positioned in this
background. It has been part and parcel with the transnational civil society movements.
It shares with other movement a parallel history. Zhao and Hackett identified from the
past four decades four waves of media democratization. Each of them is “distinct in
historical origin and ideological inspiration.” They consist of a first wave of the
NWICO debate in the 1970s and 1980s, a second wave of media globalization
growing out from the youth counterculture and the new social movements in the
1960s and 1970s in Western Europe and North America and overlapping with the first
wave in time and in literature, a third wave of media reform in societies in transition from authoritarian to more liberal and/or more democratic forms of the late 1980s till now, and a fourth wave arising in the era of the Internet of the 1990s and dawn of new century (2005: 13-6). It is clear that NWICO as the first wave and WSIS as the fourth wave are more globally mobilized than the second and third waves which are more or less regionally based.

The linking concept between NWICO and WSIS was the Right to Communicate, promoted through ten MacBride Roundtable meetings which took place almost annually from 1989 to 1999. The first MacBride Roundtable was held in Harare, Zimbabwe in October 1989 with the purpose for a reassessment of the state of global communication at the tenth anniversary of the publication of the MacBride report. It was organized by the Federation of Southern African Journalists in collaboration with the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) and the Media Foundation of the Non-Aligned (NAMEDIA). The Roundtable reexamined the problems under this new circumstance of “technological developments and the globalization of communication systems”, and concluded that “a network of interested non-governmental organizations is needed to promote dialogue on and advance new initiatives towards “a new, more just and more efficient world information and communication order”” in order to “mobilize existing international resources.” (cf. Vincent et al, 1999; Harare, 29 October 1989)

The necessity of strengthening the role of the non-governmental organizations was a general agreement reached in this MacBride Roundtable (Splichal, 1990: 400). Perhaps the most prominent characteristic of this Roundtable was the absence of governmental forces and a diverse representation of a global civil society, consisting of journalists, academics, and media-communication specialists (from 14 counties and 18 non-governmental organizations). Eight contributions from critical communication scholars, such as Kaarle Nordenstreng, Cees Hamelink, Hamid Mowlana, Michael Traber, and Slavko Splichal, were submitted and discussed (ibid). While the 1st MacBride Roundtable stated in a rather general way that the role of the non-governmental forces should be emphasized, the 2nd and 3rd MacBride Roundtable specified what types of non-governmental participation were needed. During the 2nd MacBride Roundtable, which was held in Prague and hosted by the IOJ, noted that “a specific perspective on women and women’s issues is needed since their voices have not been sufficiently heard in the movement for a NWICO.” (cf. Vincent et al, 1999; Prague, 22 September 1990) The importance of the right to communicate, a concept dated back to the 1960s, was emphasized in this round table.

The 3rd MacBride Roundtable called for a broad coalition made up of media professionals, citizen activists, consumer groups, women’s minorities, and religious, labor, environmental and other organizations. This round table also noted “the increasing concentration, homogenization, commercialization, and militarization of national and world cultures” and claimed that “the virtual monopoly of global conglomerates over the selection, production and marketing of information and entertainment products” ran against the principles of the MacBride Report. (ibid, Istanbul, 21 June 1991)

At the interval between the 3rd and the 4th MacBride Roundtable, the World Association for Christian Communication, one of the firm supporters of the NWICO, published a stock-taking source book edited by Traber and Nordenstreng (1992). A new frame of calling for global action on media issues is demonstrated in the subtitle of this book – Towards a Media Reform Movement. The three words “media reform
movement” constitutes a new perspective for media campaigning activities. It is simple, clear, inclusive and thus able to capture attention of activists at both the national and international level. In addition to this frame of media reform movement, also activated was the frame of the right to communicate. Describing the US popular resistance (the Uprising of 2003) against the release of media ownership restrictions, McChesney (2004: 223) took up the same three words.

At this moment, Traber and Nordenstreng (1992: 1) observed that “the forum for debate over the NWICO has been left to the scholars and communications specialists.” “What is needed is to bring the concerns of the MacBride Report to general attention, and encourage further debate and study by concerned individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).” Based on the participation of the MacBride Roundtables held annually from 1989 to 1991, Traber and Nordenstreng seemed to have already identified the role of a third party, which later becomes a stakeholder as civil society during the WSIS debate, from the governments and market. “By working together,” they wrote, “organizations and individuals can achieve much to ensure that the decision-making processes concerning the mass media are not left in the hands of governments or government-sponsored agencies, or of a few powerful and greedy transnational corporations” (ibid, p. 1-2).

The critical communication scholars used both the “right to communicate” and the “media reform movement” as frames to push their campaign at the subsequent MacBride Roundtable held in Sao Paulo in Brazil. The conclusions of this roundtable were summarized under three umbrellas: peace, culture, and civil society. It was under the umbrella of civil society that these two frames were promoted. This was also the first time that the term civil society appeared in the statements of MacBride Roundtable. The civil society was defined as “a concept implying that citizens have rights and duties which are not conferred on them the state, but which are universal and part of the human condition.” Under this concept, the “right to communicate” should be viewed as “an inalienable right” held by citizens as members of civil society, and the “media reform movement” should be viewed as one of the social movements, together with other movements such as environmental and feminist movements, that “are at the heart of what constitutes civil society.” (cf. Vincent et al, 1999; Sao Paulo, 21 August 1992)

The 5th MacBride Roundtable was held in Honolulu, Hawaii. The frame of a media reform movement did not appear in the roundtable statement and the right to communicate established its central position. The timing of this roundtable followed the 16th conference of the Pacific Telecommunications Council, where the “information superhighway” was proposed by the Clinton Administration. This roundtable expressed its concern about the inevitable marginalization of the poor region under such a technological scenario, and about the likelihood that it would widen the gap “between the information rich and information rich, both within individual countries and between rich and poor regions of the world to such an extent as to render it unbridgeable in the foreseeable future”. The term “digital divide” did not surface yet. (ibid, Honolulu, January 20-23, 1994)

The next two MacBride Roundtables (6th and 7th) took place respectively in two continents, Tunis of Africa with the theme of “Africa and Information Superhighway” (ibid, Tunis, March 16-18, 1995) and Seoul of Asia with the theme “Communication and Culture: Identity, Plurality and Equality” (ibid, Seoul, August 24-27, 1996). The Tunis roundtable issued a call for action concerning the development of information society in Africa. The 8th MacBride Roundtable was held in Boulder, Colorado of the
US, where it was summarized that the MacBride Roundtable reflected two historical developments towards the end of the 20th century: the growing societal influence of privately owned media and a power shift from governments toward civil society (ibid, Boulder, October 1-2, 1997); The 9th roundtable, themed “Culture and Communication: A Global Information Society” took place in Amman, Jordan (ibid, Amman, November 23-25, 1998). The 10th and also the last MacBride Roundtable took place in Leipzig where issues related to Internet governance and ICANN were discussed (Kleinwachter, 2008; Leipzig, July 1999). This linked to the civil society activism at WSIS.

Three tendencies can be distinguished from these academic and civil society discussions from then on. Firstly, the Right to Communicate came to represent a central rallying point holding together the participants. Secondly, the topics had expanded, from the criticism of the media ownership, to include ICTs. Thirdly, while continuing their appeal to governments and intergovernmental organizations for their efforts to solve global communication problems, the roundtable had on the other hand dived deeper at the grassroots level in efforts to create a global coalition of civil society forces covering widely the feminist, environmentalist, and human rights appeals.

In addition to the platform of the MacBride Roundtable, the same group of communication scholars in collaboration with some progressive media professionals had taken action on the creation of other platforms and initiatives. Cees Hamelink drafted the People’s Communication Charter in the Netherlands. George Gerbner started the Cultural Environment Movement in the US. Kaarle Nordenstreng initiated the International Monitoring Project in Finland. A group of NGOs established the Platform for Communication Rights in the UK. Before the eighth meeting of MacBride Roundtable in 1997, some critical communication scholars closely involved in the MacBride Roundtable were already engaged in the Platform for Communication Rights, which in October 2000 decided to concentrate their efforts on WSIS, soon after the official decision of the holding of WSIS itself. One year later in 2001, the Platform for Communication Rights launched the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) campaign. In this way, the academic component of the NWICO debate had diverted their efforts to global activism. At WSIS, these anti-globalization globalists had focused on the same issues raised at NWICO but “from a very different perspective and with the benefit of strategic hindsight” (O’Siochru, et al, 2005: 18). Right to Communicate, for instance, was strategically baptized into Communication Rights. As discussed in the next chapter, media activists, together with other civil society groups, constitute the second force at WSIS political process.

Exemplified in environmental and media reform activism mentioned above, it is safe to conclude that various civil society groups are increasingly integrated into a global civil society. Though it is unevenly West-based and English language dominated, its influences have spilled around the world. Feminists, environmentalists, human rights activists and media reform fighters have been moving increasingly in an informed and coordinated manner. This acceleration of cooperation between civil society groups offers insights into the definition of a multidimensional global advocacy campaign. Starting from a first level categorization of environment, there can be combined campaigns like women’s role in sustainable development, human right to a healthy environment, and media and environment. Starting from the category of women, there can be campaigns like women’s rights, gender and media. They same is true when we use human rights and media as the first level category. The campaigning catchwords
of civil society groups at WSIS demonstrated this two-level or even three-level combining feature: “Gender & ICTs,” “Environment & ICTs” etc..
Chapter 5 WSIS Politics

5.1. Four Stakeholders in Geopolitics

Many critics examined the WSIS process through the activities of three prominent stakeholders: the governments, the business community, and the civil society. In this Chapter, I intend to take a different perspective by dividing the participants of WSIS into four categories, each of which accords with one particular type of globalization identified by Majid Tehranian (2005). He clarified the four types of globalization through four geographic metaphors: globalization according to Davos, Seattle, Beijing, and Tehran. Davos was chosen because of the annually-held World Economic Forum since 1970. “Globalization according to Davos” represents the interests of global corporations and their political allies. Globalization in this sense means “a neoliberal hegemonic project to extend the costs and benefits of capitalism worldwide.” Seattle was chosen because of the occurrence of demonstration of the activists against the World Trade Organization in December 1999. “Globalization according to Seattle” represents the interests of “those layers of population in the previous industrial countries (PICs) that are losing industries and jobs to the new industrial countries (NICs) in Asia and Latin America.” Beijing was chosen due to China’s dramatic economic growth in the past thirty years after its economic integration into the world. “Globalization according to Beijing” represents the interests of those NICs benefiting from foreign investment and technological progress. Like globalization according to Seattle, “Globalization according to Tehran” is an anti-globalization process, which comprises the states and nations that are excluded from the globalization bandwagon, voluntarily or not. Inspired by Tehranian’s shorthand categorization of four types of globalization, I classify the stakeholders at WSIS into four forces corresponding respectively to Davos, Seattle, Beijing, and Tehran. I regard the first force as dominating at WSIS and the rest three as challenging forces.

The first force is a mixture of economic and political components. The economic component comprises some thousands of transnational companies such as General Electric, Daimler-Benz, Philips, and Sony, with the media companies as a small but vital portion. The political component of this force consists of the most industrialized countries as exemplified by Group of 8: Britain, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the US. The information and communication field witnessed accelerating competition among Japan, the US, and EU in liberating their telecommunications industries and promoting the information society programs, domestically and globally. It is under such atmosphere that the Plenipotentiary Conference of ITU held in Minneapolis in 1998 adopted Resolution 73 to consider holding a world summit on the information society. The United Nations subsequently brought the summit under its umbrella and adopted on 21 December 2001 Resolution 53/183, assigning ITU a leading role in the organization of the summit and encouraging the participation also from the civil society and private sector. WSIS received most of its inputs from, Group of 8. Both the political and economic components of this force were represented at WSIS. The keyword to summarize their intension is expansion. Its members promote a private sector leadership in the information society.

The civil society groups, the second force at WSIS, emerged out from the same political and economic context of the first force. Civil society can be defined as the organizations outside the state machine and the market mechanism. As a political strategy, the concept was used from the 1970s to refer to “a network of institutions – voluntary schools, publishing houses, social organizations, and so on – independently
of the decaying Communist state” (cf. Sparks, 2005: 39). Since 1999 Seattle, however, this concept has been increasingly used as a campaigning strategy against such towering market mechanisms as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and WTO. In the field of media advocacy, the legacy of the MacBride Report of the NWICO debate was inherited by 10 annually-held MacBride Roundtable meetings from 1989 to 1999 and crystallized into the Platform for Democratic Communication, which was formed in 1996 London and includes a number of international NGOs such as the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), and the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). The Platform for Democratic Communication decided in 2001 to intervene in the WSIS process by launching the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign. This also implies that all of the three pillars of the Western society – government, market, and civil society – had been replicated and represented at WSIS.

The keyword to summarize the intention of the second force at WSIS is democratization (from both the state and the market). Its members promote a multi-stakeholder approach towards building an inclusive information society. In spite of the suspicion of a wider application of multistakeholderism beyond Western social-cultural contexts in other local circumstances, the principle has undoubtedly been widely recognized from WSIS onwards as a new model of global policy making. This achievement is directly linked to the MacBride round tables and the 10th roundtable, in particular, “paved the way to the creation of CRIS and the Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus (IGC),” whose contributions ranged from the drafting of the Internet Governance terms in the Geneva Declaration of Principles, to the nomination of the representatives of a Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG), and then to the proposal of an Internet Governance Forum for future discussion (Kleinwachter, 2008). The official recognition of civil society as a legitimate stakeholder at WSIS means international diplomacy has acquired a bottom-up dimension where the essence of democracy lies. The rise of civil society groups in multinational platforms is offering new opportunities to shape the world public opinion on various issues. The civic activism in the field of communication is representative because media and ICTs themselves are the channels of communication and meanwhile the targets of commercial forces.

The third force is constituted by NICs like China, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Their primary concern is development. An economy-take-command policy has come to dominate their polities and been emphasized to such a degree that any slight derivation from it would be deemed politically incorrect. The most telling example is China, whose development strategy has witnessed a radical swing from the self-reliance policy from the 1949 to 1978 (more forcedly than voluntarily) to the integration policy from 1978 up to the present. Helped by a hardworking spirit, both strategies have been emotionally and practically pushed to extremes. The motivation for this spirit is deeply embedded in the humiliations in the modern time since the two Opium Wars fought in the middle of the 19th century. Yet the good intention to become strong and prosperous did not translate into the originally planned outcome benefiting the majority. The combination of a non-democratic political regime and an antidemocratic market has quickly widened the gap between the poor and the rich and meanwhile caused disastrous effects upon environment. The telecommunication and media industry is booming but serving the narrow interests of politics and market. Most of the rest of NICs share with China a similar history complex, development strategy, and corresponding outcomes. These countries constitute the third force at WSIS. A keyword to
summarize their intention at WSIS is development. They eagerly anticipate a miraculous leapfrog into the much-acclaimed information society regardless of their undergoing unfinished process of industrialization. They promote a government leadership in building an information society.

The fourth force is made up of Iran, Cuba, North Korea, and 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa is excluded from here and put into the third force). These countries have various kinds of misfortunes. The first three countries become the isolated corners in the global village either because of a deliberate choice or because of being strategically chosen by US as ideological enemies. Sub-Saharan Africa, a wide continental area south of the Sahara desert excluding South Africa, stands for another case of economic disassociation. In the UN Human Development Index trends between 1975 and 2004, this area is displayed in the lowest score and indicates the slimmest chance for future improvement. What they lack in general is an enabling environment of basic conditions ranging from electricity, water, and literacy, before singing a distant rhythm of information society. They are “the scar on the conscience of the world” or are “falling off the planet” (cf. Lull, 2007: 4), and are “debarred by accident of birth both from the enjoyments, and from the mental and moral advantages, which others inherit without exertion and independently of desert” (cf. Vincent, 1997: 179). The reason for this impoverishment is multi-faced, ranging from the slave trade and overexploitation of the former colonists in history, the harsh national conditions, internal ethic conflicts, and poor economic performance. A keyword to summarize their intention is inclusion. They attempt to put their problems on the agenda of WSIS for effective solutions. In fact, the ITU decision in 1998 to hold WSIS was a response to a proposal by the government of Tunisia. This implied that the original idea of WSIS came from the fourth force. In spite of this fact, this force, stuck in the middle of the power struggles of other forces, largely failed to push the course of the summit to the direction favorable for them.

To sum up, the first force is the dominating force at WSIS with the rest three taking challenging roles. Their different intentions at WSIS can be respectively summarized as expansion, democratization, development, and inclusion. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economic and cultural expansion spelled out by the first force and guaranteed by an enormous US military buildup has overwhelmed the NICs (the third force), driven desperate the marginalized nations (the fourth force), and also stimulated inside their headquarters protests from the civil society groups (the second force). The second force defend in general for an inclusive, people-centered information society against mainly a technology determinist view of the first force, that is, the alignment of the commercial entities and the conservative political elements. These labor unionists, human rights activists, and environmentalists don’t lack in their awareness and sympathy of the victimized history of the third force but they have little truck with each other. Many of the negative outcomes derived from the single-minded pursuit of economic growth of the third force go against the advocacy values of the civil society groups. The second force also keeps a close eye on the serious disintegration of the fourth force from the world. The third force are now completely involved in the world capitalist mechanism initiated and refined mainly for the benefits of the first force. Their stories of being victimized in history are now used as a bargaining advantage over the first force, whose members also never hesitate in using the bad human rights record of the third force as a bargaining point for commercial benefits. The fourth force shares a similar historical experience with the third force, which often leads to an emotional and practical coalition between them.
The topic of WSIS is at the core of the interests of the first force: the role ICTs in building an information society. How to use this global asset? This critical topic was put onto the global agenda. The topic is essentially the same with the NWICO debate on the role of the media, but the context shifted completely. Inside the developed countries (the first force), there is an erosion of alliance between US and EU due to the Iraq war. At the WSIS political debate, this division was evident in their dispute over the models of Internet governance. Inside the developing countries, there is a division between the NICs and the rest. At WSIS, the NICs formed a likeminded group, spoke assertively, and sometimes neglected the interest of other developing nations. This political and economic context favored the global elite including both the first force and the integrated national elite of the third force. Based on a categorization of four forces, the next section of this chapter moves on to analyze WSIS through four key themes: freedom of expression, intellectual property rights, Internet governance, and digital divide. The last section of the chapter attempts to explain the reason for the unbearable lightness of WSIS, as evident in its deliberate neglect of history and its adoption of a superficial technological approach towards deep-seated problems. The last section moves further to reason the two reasons. Meanwhile, along this process, I argue for the existence of an analytical advantage of the framework of four stakeholders over the conventional three stakeholders, and, within such a framework, for the importance of the relationship of the first and third forces in understanding the political process of WSIS.

5.2. The Topics of WSIS

Freedom of expression

Two important international instruments promulgate some binding terms on the freedom of expression: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 19 of UDHR narrates the freedom to hold opinions and impart information. Article 29 of the same instrument specifies the duties of such freedom. Positions on the freedom of expression of various nations can be analyzed by observing their selective attention at these two articles. ICCPR puts the freedom of expression and its accompanying duties in three points of its article 19. Its terminology is believed to tilt towards duties and responsibilities. Thus, various positions can be discerned based on their favoring or disfavoring a reference to ICCPR. As shown in the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Tunis Commitment, there is a reference to both article 19 and 29 of UDHR but no reference to ICCPR though both instruments were referred in the process of reaching such consensus. This process deserves attention. Paragraph 7 of the draft Geneva declaration of principles wrote that “the Information Society that we seek to build is one which is inclusive, where all persons, without distinction of any kind, are empowered freely to create, receive, share and utilize information and knowledge, in any media and regardless of frontiers” (WSIS/PICP/DT/1-E, 21 March 2003). Paragraph 10 of the draft declaration stated that:

The essential requirements for the development of an equitable Information Society include: The respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Notably the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to hold opinions without interference and seek to, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers in accordance with article 19 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to unhindered access by individuals to communication media and information sources…(ibid)

China wanted paragraph 7 to include a reference to Article 19 (3) of ICCPR which
mentions such restrictions on freedom of expression like “respect of rights or reputation of others” and “the protection of national security or of public order” (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/17-E, 21 May 2003). China was also unhappy about the omission of article 29 of UDHR in paragraph 10 of the draft declaration and wanted it to be mentioned together with article 19 (ibid). US (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/47-E, 30 May 2003) and EU (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/74-E, 31 May 2003) wanted only to mention Article 19 of UDHR. US went further to remind the state parties to keep distance from ICCPR. Iran and Cuba took the same position as China in the aspect of freedom of expression. The former insisted a reference to ICCPR in paragraph 10 to balance article 19 (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/104-E, 12 June 2003). The latter insisted the reference to article 29 of UDHR and ICCPR wherever there is an unbalanced reference to UDHR or its article 19 (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/84-E, 31 May 2003).

It can be concluded then the first force as represented by the US and EU tilted towards the negative freedom of expression. The US in particular intended to enforce its first amendment in a global information society. This negative freedom was open to suspicion of the market imposition of one’s idea on others due to the global imbalances of information flow. The third force seemed to promote the positive freedom of expression, or the western social responsibility model, but it was subject to suspicion of the state control of information. The second force was cautious about pitfalls from both the state and the market. In a speech given a civil society group called Article 19 Global Campaign for Free Expression in PrepCom-2 leading to Geneva summit, it attempted to develop the right to communicate as an umbrella term extending the existing provisions on freedom of expression. According to its explanation, the reason for developing such a term can be attributed, on the one hand, to the worries about traditional threats from the state, and on the other, to the concern about a parallel threat to freedom of expression imposed by the developments in the private sector especially the increasing dominance of large media corporations (Document WSIS/PC-2/CONTR/95-E, 14 February 2003). The Geneva Declaration of Principles promoted article 19 and 29 of UDHR in two separate terms and these terms are reaffirmed in Tunis Commitment approved at the Tunis Summit in 2005. Comparing the wording of the WSIS official documents in terms of freedom of expression to that of UDHR, it can be concluded that WSIS documents reflect a more liberal mentality than UDHR.

**Intellectual property**

In addition to freedom of expression, intellectual property is another critical theme debated at WSIS. Relevant instruments include TRIPS and WIPO copyright treaty, which represent the business interests of the first force in their prescriptions of overprotective terms on intellectual property. These instruments impose a single standard on intellectual property protection, regardless of different levels of development. Against such a backdrop, it should be reasonable to anticipate that WSIS would pose a challenge to these existing mechanisms by adopting some less restrictive principles. This anticipation, however, was not materialized due to the pressures from US and Microsoft. This influence is evident in a comparison of the draft declaration of principles and draft plan of action to the final outcomes, and in the confrontation between US and Brazil on this issue. The draft declaration of principles gives a very clear message in promoting open source software to reduce the cost of access to information: open standards and open source software are basic elements in the development of a more affordable access to ICTs (WSIS/PICP/DT/1-E, 21 March 2003). Draft plan of action pinpoints what standards and open source software could be deployed. Paragraph 34 of the draft plan of action goes further to suggest that
“global consensus achieved on IPR issues in multilateral organizations” is insufficient to strike a fair balance between the owners and users, and that “an appropriate legal framework should be defined for the development of a public domain of information and knowledge” (Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/2-E, 21 March 2003).

When commenting on these drafts, the US was unhappy about the promotion of open source software and suggested that “WSIS should remain neutral with respect to different technologies and modes of technology development” (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/47-E, 30 May 2003). US believed that the existing international instruments are sufficient to achieve the balance between the owners and users of intellectual property, and argued that WIPO, rather than WSIS, should be the appropriate United Nations forum for such issues (Document WSIS-II/PC-3/CONTR/035-E). Brazil, on the contrary, showed an opposite position to the US in the matter. Brazil intended to insert two additional terms into the draft plan of action: Development and deployment of public copyleft software should be encouraged, and awareness of open-source/free software copyleft software should be created, especially in the developing countries (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/60-E, 31 May 2003). Civil society groups were outspoken. Its working group on patents, copyrights, and trademarks recommended that WSIS should reject TRIPS and WIPO copyright treaty by promoting free software, claiming that “if everyone in your country uses a program that’s secret and controlled by a single company, that’s not development, that’s electronic colonization” (Civil Society Statement, 16 July 2003).

Judged by the final official outcomes, WSIS did not achieve any breakthrough in intellectual property issues. The good willing for changes embodied in the early drafts was suppressed. Paragraph 27 and paragraph 42 in Geneva Declaration of Principles implies an even more conservative view than TRIPS. Paragraph 27 writes about access to software:

> Access to information and knowledge can be promoted by increasing awareness among all stakeholders of the possibilities offered by different software models, including proprietary, open-source and free software, in order to increase competition, access by users, diversity of choice, and to enable all users to develop solutions which best meet their requirements. Affordable access to software should be considered as an important component of a truly inclusive information society.

When every one is conscious of the near-monopoly market position of Microsoft proprietary software, this paragraph would become less awkward to read if it did not mention proprietary software model. Paragraph 42 writes that intellectual property protection and knowledge sharing are equally important. This plain statement is a more neutral wording than paragraph 27. The Plan of Action replicates almost the same words used in paragraph 27. This neutrality was exactly what US and Microsoft desired.

**Internet governance**

Much controversy at WSIS centered on Internet governance. The other three key themes, freedom of expression, intellectual property, and digital divide can also be brought under the umbrella of Internet governance. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) manages the core resources of the Internet. The fact that ICANN is based in US and has a contractual relationship with US
Department of Commerce is where controversy lies. The broad implication of US dominance over Internet is mainly two-fold. Practically, it means, however unlikely, US has the ability to remove one country from the Internet. Symbolically, it means a disorder of international bureaucratic authority, namely, any other country’s decision to set up a top level domain name should obtain permission from the US Department of Commerce. WSIS stood for an opportunity to put Internet governance on a more equal footing. This challenge was serious because there was not only concerted action between the third and fourth force but also a division in the first force. Notably, France and Japan and some other countries of the first force are among the losers of Internet 1.0 (Cukier, 2005: 161). The civil society participants also had a strong request to reform ICANN. It is in this sense the sensational and oversimplified “US Vs. The World” media statement has some element of truth. Almost all the resources held by WSIS proved relevant for a challenge to ICANN (Klein, 2004: 10).

The draft principles and plan of action, based on the discussions in the Working Group of Sub-Committee 2 of the PrepCom-2, were pro-government-leadership. Paragraph 44 of the draft principles stated “the coordination responsibility for root servers, domain names, and Internet Protocol (IP) address assignment should rest with a suitable international, intergovernmental organization” and “the policy authority for country code top-level-domain names (ccTLDs) should be the sovereign right of countries” (Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/1-E). The wording of paragraph 15 of the draft plan of action was more straightforward, claiming that “guidelines on Internet contracts should be established and existing contracts for Internet traffic renegotiated” (WSIS/PC-2/PCIP/DT/2-E). When commenting on these drafts, the US recommended that the negotiations on Internet interconnection agreements should be on commercial and private basis and rejected a renegotiation of the existing contracts (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/47-E). In general, there were three contesting approaches before Geneva Summit: government leadership, private sector leadership, and multi-stakeholder. The third and the fourth force (developing countries) led by China, India, Brazil, and South Africa hoped to bring Internet governance under an intergovernmental organization such as the ITU (Kleinwachter, 2006: 3). They preferred the government leadership in Internet governance leadership. Most developed nations (the first force) disliked a governmental approach, fearing the politicization of the Internet. They were united under a principle of the private-sector leadership though some of them had reservations over the US dominance of Internet through ICANN. Civil society groups (the second force) opposed a governmental approach, kept distance from the private sector leadership principle, and desired a multi-stakeholder approach, inviting more participation from grassroots.

The Geneva Summit managed to establish a quasi multi-stakeholder model by sorting out the broad roles of states, private sector, civil society and international organizations in Internet matters. The Geneva Declaration of Principles assigned the states a primary role in Internet-related public policy issues, the private sector in the technical and economic fields, and civil society at community level. The official outcomes of the Geneva Summit dropped all the lines which may hint on a challenge to ICANN, but decided to invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish a Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) to (1) develop a working definition of Internet governance, (2) identify the public policy issues, and (3) develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. WGIG, comprising 40 members from various sectors, released their report on 14 July 2005. It fulfilled its three missions by laying down the following framework available for debate at PrepCom-3 of Tunis Summit.
The working definition of Internet governance is “the development and application by Governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.” The public policy issues consist of four categories: issues relating to infrastructure and the management of critical Internet resources such as the administration of domain names and IP addresses; issues relating to the use of the Internet, including spam, network security and cybercrime; issues that are relevant to the Internet but have an impact much wider than the Internet and for which existing organizations are responsible, such as intellectual property rights (IPRs) or international trade; and issues relating to the developmental aspects of Internet governance, in particular capacity-building in developing countries. These four categories of issues were further broken down into 13 priority themes. Regarding the third mission, the WGIG singled out 15 specific roles and responsibilities for governments, 8 for private sector, and 14 for civil society. (Document WSIS-II/PC-3/DOC/5-E, 3 August 2005)

The WGIG failed to agree on the controversial oversight function – whether or not there should be a replacement of ICANN, but proposed four possible models. Kleinwachter (2006: 7), one member of the WGIG, summarized four visions favored by various members. Some members preferred the “Status Quo” model. That is, ICANN and the unilateral role of the US Government should be kept. Some preferred a “Status Quo Plus” model. That is, there should be a mechanism of an Intergovernmental Internet Council which would replace the current role played by the US and the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) of ICANN in order to promote a greater role for all governments. Others preferred a “Status Quo Plus Plus” model. To that end, a new UN-like Intergovernmental Internet Organization should be set up. Still others preferred a “Status Quo Minus” model. Namely, no specific role of any government should be promoted. Having anticipated the controversies over ICANN, WGIG prepared a compromise for the Tunis Summit, just like the decision to set up WGIG, by proposing the establishment of an Internet Governance Forum as a long-term and evolutionary mechanism to address Internet matters in a multi-stakeholder approach.

On 27-28 June 2005, the EU Council of Ministers held in Luxembourg outlined its position on Internet governance by proposing a new co-operation model to solve the conflicts over the management of the Internet’s core resources, namely the domain names systems, IP addresses, and the root server system. This new co-operation model stated that “the existing Internet Governance mechanisms should be founded on a more solid democratic, transparent and multilateral basis, with a stronger emphasis on the public policy interest of all governments” and was based on two principles: (1) It should not replace existing mechanisms or institutions, but should build on the existing structures of Internet governance, with a special emphasis on the complementarity between all the actors involved in this process, including governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. (2) The new public-private co-operation model should contribute to the sustainable stability and robustness of the Internet by addressing appropriately public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance (Council of the EU, press release, 2671st Council Meeting). The new co-operation model did not fit into any of the four models suggested by WGIG. It did not fit into the Status Quo model preferred by the United States, as it encouraged the internationalization of the Internet governance. It certainly was not the Status Quo Plus Plus model or the Status Quo Minus Model. It differed from the Status Quo Plus model because it specifically confined the role of governments in “principle issues of public policy” (with the private sector responsible
for day to day management) and stressed their “mission and responsibility vis-à-vis their citizens.” Bearing a European mark, this “public-private co-operation model” reflected the ongoing policy “oscillation between broader social concerns and a more technology and market-oriented focus” (Servaes, 2003: 12), intensified by challenges from US and Asia-Pacific. It also contained certain frustrations, from the perspective of policy-makers, over how to pervers a public sphere under the pressure of commercialization. As a political strategy, this proposal can be read as the intention of EU to find a compromise between the developing nations and the US.

On 30 June 2005, US Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) released the “US Statement of Principles on the Internet’s Domain Name and Addressing System.” The principles were listed in four points: (1) US Government intends to preserve the security and stability of the Internet’s Domain Name and Addressing System (DNS); (2) Governments have legitimate interest in the management of their country code top level domains (ccTLD); (3) ICANN is the appropriate technical manager of the Internet DNS; and (4) Dialogue related to Internet governance should continue in relevant multiple fora (NTIA, 30 June 2005). The statement represented a conservative approach of maintaining the Status Quo. The logic of statement was self-contradictory as noted by Kleinwachter and clearly conveyed the message of unilateralism. According to the statement and other arguments the US used at WSIS, the “Status Quo Plus” and “Status Quo Plus Plus” approaches were unacceptable for the US due to their nature of politicizing the Internet governance. The “Status Quo Minus” approach was unacceptable too because US refused to keep its own hands off ICANN. That is, its own politicization of the Internet was acceptable. The statement reads more like a political strategy than “principles.” It responded to the developing nations by having one principle respecting national sovereignty but undermined the consensus on a multi stakeholder approach reached at the Geneva Summit. This logic was in coherence with the military action in Iraq. While the US government clung to the dominance on the Internet Governance, other governments, in the eyes of the US, “must focus on creating, within their own nations, the appropriate legal, regulatory, and policy environment that encourages privatization, competition, and liberalization.” This was found by the US “a fundamental area of public policy which is absent from the WGIG report” (Document WSIS-II/PC-3/CONTR/035-E, 17 August 2005).

On 1 August 2005, EU’s proposal of a new co-operation made way into its comment on the WGIG report but was not officially raised until on 30 September 2005, at the end of PrepCom-3 leading to Tunis Summit. It was welcomed by the developing nations especially the like-minded group comprising Brazil, China, etc., who saw this as a split between EU and the US, but was strongly opposed by the US, who worried this may result in the establishment of an intergovernmental control system over the Internet (cf. Kleinwachter, 2006: 7). The EU-US dispute became so intense that it shifted the confrontation between the third/four force and the first force at the Geneva Summit into the confrontation between EU and the US. So did the media attention. The US launched heavy lobbying campaigns to reverse the situation, and the most significant one was evident in a letter sent from the US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice to the UK foreign minister Jack Straw who took the role of presidency of EU, requesting him to reconsider the EU proposal on Internet governance (The Register, 2 December 2005). As time was running out and there must be a consensus, the consensus was made by the “creative ambiguity” in the language of the 54 paragraphs of the Internet Governance part in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, which allowed every stakeholder to declare victory (ibid, Kleinwachter).
Paragraph 63 of the Tunis Agenda recognized that “countries should not be involved in decisions regarding another country’s country code Top-Level Domain (ccTLD).” This was the recognition of national sovereignty, as demanded by the third and some of the fourth force. Paragraph 69 to 71 stated broadly that there should be enhanced cooperation among various stakeholders, inviting also the UN Secretary General to start such a process towards enhanced cooperation. This was the recognition of EU’s new cooperation model. Paragraph 72 asked the UN Secretary-General to convene the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in which the unsettled issues on Internet governance would be kept under debate. This was a direct outcome of the WGIG efforts and prepared a way out for all the stakeholders. However, paragraph 77 clearly that IGF would have no oversight function. A replacement of ICANN did not occur, nor a removal of US dominance over it. The form of multi stakeholder approach overt Internet governance will be debated further. So far, it can be concluded that the Internet governance debate was yet another case of loud-thundering-but-little-raindrop. The most important achievement might be that WSIS established an open and valuable platform (WGIG and then IGF). The distinct feature of IGF, empowered only with talking right, might lead to some deeper insights over Internet governance, regardless of the chance of being set in motion politically.

Digital divide
WSIS had a default consensus: bridging digital divide. WSIS demonstrated two notable failures in this aspect. Firstly, it did not bring out any coherent officially-approved understanding about digital divide. The way digital divide issue was handled was against common sense. A logic first step to tackle digital divide might be to reach common understanding about what digital divide is and to explore the roots for such a divide, and looking for therapies can follow as the next step. WSIS, however, took the understanding of digital divide for granted. It skipped the first step and moved directly onto finding solutions. As identified by PrepCom-1 of Geneva Summit, one of the principles “guiding the preparatory work and the WSIS” was the need to find a shared understanding of and to raise awareness of “how the challenges of the digital divide can be met” (Document WSIS03/PREP-1/11(Rev.1)-E, 12 July 2002). In this way, WSIS started with asking “how” rather than “what.” It did not even bother to offer a working definition of digital divide (though a voluntary digital solidarity fund was created) as it did with Internet governance.

Internet-related digital divide can be defined through two levels: access to Internet, and content and applications. The first level of definition measures digital divide in terms of access, using various indicators such as gender, ethnical background, etc. This measurement decides whether there is a basic condition to materialize broad discussions over the long-cherished fundamental values in an information society (for instance, Article 19 in cyberspace). The second level of measurement focuses on the diversity of online activities such as information-seeking or entertaining, to explore the gains or losses of being logged on. This measurement would, to some extent, tell whether Internet is producing good citizens or obedient consumers. Gandy (2002: 448) observed the effects of new media in “widening the distinction between the citizen and the consumer,” and this is what he believed “the real digital divide.” The concerns over the second level of digital divide were scattered in some official presentations and the Report of the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms (TFFM). For example, addressing the Geneva Summit in 2003, UN General Secretary Kofi Annan touched upon several possible aspects of digital divide: infrastructure, content, gender, and commercial. The Report of the TFFM sorted out the roles ICTs might play in poverty reduction, health care, education, good governance, and gender equity. But these efforts failed to crystallize into an official definition of digital divide. I regard this as a
great flaw of the summit, because such neglect may confine people’s understanding about digital divide solely in the first level.

In addition to its inattentiveness to the second level of digital divide, the second serious flaw of WSIS was its poor prescriptions bridging digital divide. WSIS at the very start was preoccupied with the disputes over the proposal of a Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF). Digital solidarity was an African initiative proposed by Senegal president Abdoulaye Wade at PrepCom-3 of Geneva Summit. The proposal received support from the countries of the fourth force backed by China, but strong opposition from the first force (the main donor countries). The donor countries were of the opinion that digital divide should be disseminated into separate programs such as health, education, and agriculture rather than stand alone, and thus preferred to use the existing development programs either of the UN Millennium projects or bilateral ones instead of inventing a new one (Souter, 2007: 26). The dispute almost paralyzed PrepCom-3 but subsided due to the coordinating efforts made by the Swiss chair. It was agreed that a Task Force would be set up to investigate the feasibility of such a fund. Geneva Summit asked the Task Force to review all the existing financial mechanisms. “Based on the conclusion of the review, improvements and innovations of financing mechanisms will be considered including the effectiveness, the feasibility and the creation of a voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund…” (Plan of Action, 10-12 December 2003)

At the request of the Geneva Summit, the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms was launched on 4 October 2004. A report was submitted on 22 December 2004. Its remit and conclusions were mainly concerned with ICT infrastructure finance (Souter, 2007: 8). The governments are recommended to maximize the attractiveness of their environments to private sector infrastructure investment. The financing mechanism “needs to be framed in the context of the Monterey Consensus and the Millennium Declaration that can be seen as overall drivers for development financing in the global and national contexts” (The Report of the TEFM: 11). In general, the Japan-sponsored task force gave almost complete endorsement to the opinion of the donors and provided little support for setting-up of such fund. Moreover, these disputes over DSF diverted attention from fundamental structural problems in international communication onto yet another subsidiary project, which, feasible or not, does not seem to have the prospects of opening up real opportunities, given the lessons learnt from IDPC of the NWICO debate and other earlier similar projects. In the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, DSF was treated as a complementing mechanism to the existing ones and as “an innovative financial mechanism of a voluntary nature open to interested stakeholders…”

5.3. The Lightness of WSIS

The interactions between these four forces over freedom of expression, intellectual property rights, Internet governance, and digital divide revealed that WSIS achieved little in tackling structural problems. The reason lied in the lack in a historical perspective and its overemphasis of a market/technological perspective. Broadly speaking, history here means the long history of colonial expansion by European nations into the rest of the world. This is deemed by Hamelink (1995: 301) to be a central factor which explains the global information imbalance. As discussed in Chapter 3, this constitutes the main background of a political debate on NWICO. In addition to this neglect of the earlier history, WSIS gave little attention to the US war on Iraq happening almost concurrently with WSIS. Specifically speaking, history means the three important multilateral attempts preceding WSIS to tackle media and
information issues: the discussions on the role of media in public opinion from the late 1920s to 1930s, the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information in 1948, and the debate on NWICO from the late 1970s to early 1980s (Gerbner, Mowlana and Nordenstreng 1993; Hamelink 2005). Despite the efforts made by academics and some civil society groups to bring WSIS back to the ground by reminding about history, either broad or specific, the political forces at WSIS in general brushed history aside. It is confusing to read UN Secretary General’s claim that the WSIS is “unique” in that it was about the future rather than about “global threats” (Opening Statement at WSIS, 10 December 2003).

The neglect of history, by the first force mainly, was most evidently demonstrated in its refusal to face NWICO, which called for in question an overall structural arrangement of inequality. The most explicit expression of such a fear – or denial of history – was made through an industry-supported NGO, the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC). In the working paper presented for conference on Internet press freedom, the European Representative of WPFC, Ronald Koven, alerted at the proposed texts of PrepCom-2 for Geneva Summit, condemning that “those texts contain a very large number of concepts traditionally dear to would-be press controllers” (New York, 26-28 June 2003). The dangerous concepts he pinpointed include the “right to communicate,” “balancing information flows,” and “informational respect for national sovereignty” (ibid). On another occasion, Koven (2005: 202) warned that WSIS might be used as an opportunity to “enact international restrictions on all forms of press” like NWICO did. He was critical of the make-up of the 40 members of the WGIG, asserting that countries that “favor strong Internet content controls” (Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa and Tunisia) were overrepresented than “free speech countries” (Britain, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway), and three civil society members lined up with “restrictionist” CRIS (Communication Rights in the Information Society) Campaign (Document WSIS-II/PC-3/CONTR/18-E, 22 July 2005). While accusing those governments of reaching out to control cyberspace, Koven gave no attention to the fact that those same governments were promoting open-source software against the market monopoly of Microsoft. WPFC represents a negative freedom approach towards free speech, a view preferred by its industry sponsors and typical of the first force. According this logic, article 29 of UDHR should be abandoned and any reference to media responsibility and accuracy is against freedom of expression.

History is left in the hands of some academics and democracy-inspired civil society groups. Hence, Nordenstreng (2005: 119) observed that in spite of the fact that “WSIS represents the highest and broadest platform of global negotiations on communication which ever has taken place,” it is still too early to make the judgment on whether WSIS will become a platform to turn good intentions into reality or simply “a late repeat of the dot-com bubble at the level of international diplomacy.” The episode of history Nordenstreng turned attention to was the global communication negotiations on the use of press news to reduce risks of international misunderstanding at the League of Nations in the late 1920s and 1930s. The breakout of the Second World War announced its failure. The efforts made by the League of Nations towards international understanding and its failure were highly relevant to the context of WSIS, but they widely differed in their approaches towards communication. Despite its failure, the League of Nations was at least addressing fundamental issues. WSIS, though sharing a similar war background with its precedent, had in a large measure either avoided these fundamental issues or offered a technological determinist therapy as solutions. While reminding us about WSIS of its historical position as yet another attempt to tackle globally information and communication issues and thus being not
unique, Cees Hamelink (2005: 125-30) pointed out that, in order to learn from the mistakes of the past, WSIS had to meet three essential challenges: technological, moral, and social. Judged from the Geneva phase of WSIS, he concluded that the international community failed to live up to the three essential challenges. The CRIS (Communication Rights in Information Society) Campaign, a name itself baptized from the “Right to Communicate” concept symbolizing the legacy of NWICO, expressed its concerns over a wide spectrum of issues such as “excessive copyright protection and monopolies on intellectual products, growing concentration of media ownership, censorship, and the limitations of a purely market-driven approach” (O’Siochru, 12 December 2003).

Another key reason for the lightness of WSIS was its market/technological determinist perspective towards problems. Again, the choice of ITU, a technically oriented UN agency to hold WSIS is noteworthy (Zhao and Hackett, 2005: 8). As noted by Daya Thussu (2000: 91-2), the amendments made to ITU constitution at 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference held in Minneapolis, the same conference that made the decision to convene WSIS, gave “greater rights and responsibilities to the ITU’s private-sector members”, and “opened the organization up to private corporations interested in developing global telecommunications networks and services.” “Under the new international communication regime, the ITU advises countries to dismantle structural regulations preventing cross-ownership among broadcasters, cable operators and telecom companies.” “In essence, the ITU was following the communication agenda set by the world’s most powerful nations and the telecommunications corporations based in them.” Thus, choosing ITU for the convention of WSIS primed a market/technological perspective benefiting the first force. It is easier to understand that much of the input for WSIS had come from G8. The third force countries are pursuing a similar privatization and commercialization strategy.

It is not surprising that the therapy WSIS prescribed to bridging digital divide or turning it into digital opportunity is to privatize and deregulate for the installation of ICTs. The “visions” of an information society consist of the market control of freedom of expression and of intellectual property rights, a market/technology solution to digital divide, and the US dominance of the Internet governance. Paragraph 9 of Geneva Declaration of Principles states that “we are aware that ICTs should be regarded as tools and not as an end in themselves” and “under favorable conditions, these technologies can be a powerful instrument, increasing productivity, generating economic growth, job creation and employability and improving the quality of life of all.” The reality, however, is that ICTs were indeed treated as ends, and the favorable conditions were a market-friendly environment. The most evident case for an indication of such market/technology determinist mentality is the One Child per Laptop (OCPL) project initiated by MIT Media Lab. The essence of the project, as summarized by Nazmul Huda (APC, 22 May 2006), was a “cleverly designed marketing plan” incorporated into Western assistance programs backed by UN and executed by corrupt governments to exploit the poor. His opinion seemed to be over suspicious of the good intention of the project initiators but was at least partially supported by the evidence from the case of Uruguay, the only country in the world that has adopted OCPL as government policy. The project has achieved little but has eaten up 10% of the government’s two year total budget for education. The report concluded that it is naïve to presume that just giving the children a machine will solve the problems and make them happy (APC news, 16 October 2007). OCPL project was just a vivid showcase of a narrow technology determinist mentality of WSIS. If the only thing WSIS succeeded is to build up worldwide awareness about the importance of ICTs, then it is of vital significance to ask what kind of awareness has WSIS
fostered.

5.4. The Power Logic of WSIS

Were WSIS able to longitudinally put information society issues into a historical background and horizontally connect this to a wider social context, it should have acquired much more weight than other summits of the past such as the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro or the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. WSIS, however, did neither, despite the mounting evidence of inequalities, protests, and crisis-like events which are calling for urgent actions. Neither the previous industrial countries nor their followers – the new industrial countries – are interested in confronting these inequalities. Both of them are anxious for expansion and development which are creating more inequalities. Though these two forces were seemingly under heavy confrontations with each other at WSIS, they are unanimous in treating the information sector as a new site of capitalist accumulation or “a new point of economic growth” in the case of China. The far-stretched economic/cultural penetration of the first force into the third has reached such a degree that both of their ruling elites are now on the same boat guided by the beacon of neo-liberalism. Their intense interactions and the coming into shape of their relations, both multilateral and bilateral, should be called into question.

Only by clarifying the relationship between the first and third force can we gain sufficient understanding about whose agenda of information society WSIS promoted and the way it was promoted. Their relationship links up the rest and holds the key for a fair understanding of WSIS. Whereas in one sense WSIS can be understood as the challenge of the third force to the first, it can be more accurately understood in another sense as part of the taming process exercised by the first force over the third. According to Johan Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism, the purpose of this taming process is to set up a bridgehead in the third force. Galtung defines the world into Center nation and Periphery nation, and within each of them there are a highly developed center (the center of the Center, the center of the Periphery) and a less developed periphery (the periphery of Center, the periphery of the Periphery). Under such divisions, structural imperialism is “a sophisticated type of dominance relation which cuts across nations, basing itself on a bridgehead which the center in the Center nation establishes in the center of the Periphery nation, for the joint benefit of both” (Galtung, 1971). The outcome of structural imperialism, according to Galtung, is that there is harmony of interest between the center in the Center nation and the center in the Periphery nation, less harmony of interest within the Periphery nation than within the Center nations, and disharmony of interest between the periphery in the Center nation and the periphery in the Periphery nation (see also Thussu, 2000: 64-5). This outcome of imperialism emphasizes that the center in the Periphery nation is tied to the center in the Center nation through the best possible tie – the tie of harmony of interest, or the pursuit of compatible goals.

WSIS can be viewed as part of the process for the first force (the Center nations) to tame the third force (the ruling elite of the Periphery nations) into their bridgeheads in order to serve the interests of all parties. In the end, the ruling elite of the third force would function like a transmission belt to forward interests to the first force, rely on the first force for their legitimacy to rule, and share closer cultural values with the first force than with other groups in their own nation. (ibid) So far for the time being, the first force has at least half achieved its purpose of taming. The nations of the third force (China, India, Brazil, etc) are now undergoing an integrating process into “an informal American empire” (cf. Zhao, 2005) and into an “imperial global rainbow” (cf.
Thus, the relationship between the first force and third force is characterized by this co-opting process, which is based on the condition that the nations within these two forces are now coupled together and interacting. As noted by Galtung, this is an important condition for the exercise of the economic domination. This ongoing taming process should be taken into consideration when analyzing the political negotiations at WSIS. When the third force was upholding the national sovereignty principle, the interests of three groups might be in their mind: the interests of their national majority (culture, industry, or environment), the interests of the ruling elite (in the case of WSIS, themselves), and the interests of corporations based in their territory, of the first force. The most frequent option is the latter two, resulting in the fact that the third force needs the help of transnational capital to create more miracles of economic growth to maintain their political legitimacy.

Consider the interactions between the US and China. Freedom of expression or many other human rights issues are frequently traded for economic interests, a formula I would call human rights for Boeing planes/Airbus (for EU). That is, the Chinese ruling elite give out economic interests to tone down the Western attention on its human rights record. In some occasions, the card is also vise versa played by the political agents of transnational corporations. The deal is struck between the Chinese ruling elite and the first force. Therefore, two weeks before the visit of the Chinese President Hu Jintao’s visit to the US on 18-22 April 2006, Vice Premier Wu Yi headed a large squad of businessmen and economic officials on a shopping spree to the US, ordering US goods at the gross value of US$15 billion including 80 Boeing 737 planes. This is the economic gesture to tone down the political pressure over China’s human rights record among all. The first issue on the agenda of President Hu’s visit was to dinner with Bill Gates at Seattle, where Hu conveyed China’s determination to protect intellectual property rights. Reciprocally, Microsoft, together with other US technological companies such as Cisco, Google, Yahoo, Skype, and Sun Microsystems helped Chinese ruling elite with the installation of relevant hardware and software to filter Internet content and monitor Chinese Internet users. The pragmatism demonstrated in these bilateral interactions call into question both China’s insistence of the responsibility of freedom of expression and the US’s insistence of an indefinite freedom of expression. Both of them may be a far cry from the nature of freedom and democracy. It also explains why the challenge to Microsoft in open source software was led by Brazil rather than China. The US-Brazil dispute, however, may end up with a bilateral arrangement, though it was temporarily agreed that the issue will be moved to WIPO for more debate, leaving the bewildered civil society fighting alone. These political maneuvers raise questions about the variations between domestic politics and foreign policy. In Galtung’s analysis of the state terrorism of the US, he quoted the opening of the manifesto by 120 American intellectuals: “The central fallacy of the pro-war celebrants is the equation between “American values” as understood at home the exercise of the US economic and especially military power abroad” (Galtung, 2004: 57). Due to the interplay of domestic and foreign power, the communicative process in China is dominated by “a newly reconstituted power bloc” formed by “the bureaucratic capitalists of a reformed Party state, transnational corporate capital, and an emerging urban middle class, whose members are the favored consumers of both domestic and transnational capital” (Zhao, 2003: 53). The interests and voices of the majority, the Chinese peasants constituting seven-tenths of China’s 1.3 billion population and most of them falling into the World Bank’s “Fourth World” category (Dan Schiller, 2007: 197), are being sacrificed.

China is not alone in facing an expanding poor-rich divide. According to the UN Gini Index, the same situation exists in other third force nations like Brazil and South
Africa. Tehranian (1998) coined the word pancapitalism to depict the current fragmented world. Pancapitalism is developing the world into a global apartheid like the South African apartheid regime, “divided between castles inhabited by the lords of the manors, protected by moats of electronic surveillance, and surrounded by teeming, restless peasants living in Panopticon societies controlled by the castles’ watchmen stationed in the towering cameras of remote sensing satellites.” What WSIS decided to do is to release further the market/technological logic to solve inequalities when it is the same logic that worsens inequalities. The common interests between the first force and the third have steered the course of WSIS away from its promises to bridge the digital divide. This absence of political good will confirms a pessimistic perspective in the academic accounts on the information society. As noted by Nordenstreng (2004b: 255), the pessimistic perspective thinks that information and communication technologies serve predominantly as “new means of maintaining, and even worsening, inequality between people and nations, whereby haves and have-nots are separated from each other, not only by the traditional socio-economic factors, but also by a digital divide…” as opposed to its conflicting optimistic view that ICTs will bring out a prosperously and peacefully interconnected global community. While academically there is no difficulty in telling those who sing the songs of paradise from those who hear the looming of hell, politicians acted in its usual way. Sitting in the driver’s seat of WSIS, they switched on the headlight on the left side signaling a road to paradise, but turned the automobile to the right side heading for hell. No real challenge was posed on the way. Despite their being deprived of the power in policy making, the attempts by the civil society groups are impressive. Their views are in sharp contrast with three political forces. At this point, Cees Hamelink (2004) deemed their confrontation as “the conflict between divergent potential agendas on globalization.” One is the neo-liberal agenda that is commercially oriented and market centered. The other is a humanitarian agenda that “puts the interest of citizens at the center of political activity and proposes the regulation of capital flows, the protection of the environment, and fair labor conditions.” The former agenda Hamelink pinpointed was promoted by both the first and third force and even the fourth to some degree; the latter mainly by the second force.

The outcome of WSIS led people to question further: Are there other factors which can better explain the popularity of a market/technological perspective narrowly rooted in a historical vacuum or presentism? In Hamelink’s view, the ubiquity of such perspective at WSIS is embedded in the technological culture itself (Hamelink, 2005). Hamelink told three stories to illustrate a technological challenge which WSIS failed to meet: the Titanic, Cassandra and Dr Frankenstein. Titanic stands for the belief in the perfection of technology which holds that the ship cannot sink and there is no need to keep enough life boats on board. In the second story, Cassandra warned her father, the Trojan king of Priamus, that there were Greeks in the wooden horse, but ironically, she had the gift to foresee the future but was cursed by Apollo with the punishment that no one would listen to her warning. Hamelink treated this ignorance of warning voices as characteristic of the technological culture. “In situations where decision makers experience a new era, a winning mood, and the pressures of time and competition: all traffic lights will be ignored, the dissidents will be silenced and technology choice becomes a matter of flying blind.” In the third story, Dr Frankenstein created a monster which fled from his laboratory and he had to create another one to haunt it. Hamelink employed this story to raise the question about accountability of technological innovation. Who should take responsibility when the Titanic sank and the Greeks occupied the Trojan city? “Who takes responsibility if we resolve the digital divide and subsequently face insurmountable environmental problems?” In addition to this technological challenge, Hamelink moved onto the
moral and social challenge that WSIS failed to meet.

In his book *The Digital Sublime*, Mosco (2004) took myth, an important dimension of cultural analysis, as a point of departure to examine cyberspace. Myths are defined as “stories that animate individuals and societies by providing paths to transcendence that lift people out of the banality of every.” “They offer entrance to another reality, a reality once characterized by the promise of the sublime.” Cyberspace, computer communication, and Internet “embody and drive myth important myths about our time”, and according to these myths, we would “experience an epochal transformation in human experience that would transcend time (the end of history), space (the end of geography), and power (the end of politics).” Similar to these cyberspace myths, there were in the history myths about telegraph, electricity, the telephone, and broadcasting, which made similar claims about endings. These endings are still being recycled nowadays. Thus, “it is very much a living end.” After a deconstruction of these myths, Mosco adopted the political economic perspective to analyze what are the mechanisms upon which myths are built and whose benefits are served by these repeated calls of endings. The belief of the end of politics, for example, is compatible with the neo-liberal philosophy in calling for the deregulation and privatization of the world’s telecommunication systems.

The relevance of Mosco’s combination of cultural and political economic perspective in treating cyberspace to the politics of WSIS is two-fold. On the one hand, it demonstrates the importance to unveil the myths by exploring the history, observing that the deliberate omission of history helped WSIS to boost the magical power of ICTs. On the other hand, it shows that deconstructing myths is insufficient in preventing some valueless repetitions of history because myths are not judged by true or false (accurate or inaccurate) but by living or dead. Proving false may not necessarily lead to the death of a myth. It is important to find out the mechanisms behind myths. Mosco listed rich examples to illustrate this point. In his skepticism of the inherent democratic value of the Internet, he indicated that the current optimism of the Internet is reminiscent of the early use of wireless technology. When amateur enthusiasts and educators were pioneering the new wireless technology in the 1920s, they also envisioned a virtual community in which invisible messages could travel freely of the interference of material forces. But businesses quickly smelled the potential profits of controlling the technology and forced governments to open radio to commerce. Governments either took complete control of the new technology or shared it with businesses, while the early pioneers were left little. The same story is now being replicated on the Internet. In Mosco’s opinion, unmasking of the myth about Internet, as McChesney did in pointing out the absence of an inevitable link between today’s Internet and “a new sense of community,” “democratic communication,” and “a rebirth of education online,” is only “part of the process of preventing another lost opportunity.”

WSIS offered a world ceremony for the market and political forces to conjure up or strengthen the myths about information society and its central symbol – the Internet. Confronted with mounting pressures exercised by various forms of inequalities, politicians and market forces need these myths more than ever before. The gloomier the reality looks, the more reliant these political and market forces become on new promises. As noted by Nicholas Garnham (1997: 327), the information society discourse helped the politicians to offer a technological fix to deep seated social and economic problems, and as a “new” initiative it distracts attention away from the failure of previous similar initiatives to solve these problems. NWICO stood for a rare opportunity for structural and democratic changes. WSIS missed another opportunity.
After a comparison of WSIS and MacBride Report, Mansell and Nordenstreng (2006) argued that the issues and dilemmas addressed in MacBride Report still exist, and this time the hope for changes was shifted from satellite television to the Internet. The naïve thinking that the end of Cold War may produce good will for sincere international negotiations has been in a large measure rejected by repeated negative evidence. Structural inequality in international dialogue has become more resistant towards change. Under such a context, WSIS can be viewed as a world banquet to feed the desperate with new hope and the advantaged with new opportunities to exploit. Information society may offer nothing new but an update or even escalation of the ground realities in a new platform.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1. Summary

Firstly, the process from NWICO to WSIS reflects the shifts of geopolitics.

NWICO was essentially an information decolonization initiative of the developing South against the capitalist West, together with a broader economic initiative – a New International Economic Order (NIEO). Most of countries of the Socialist East were supportive of the South in spite of the heavy confrontation between China and Soviet Union. The temporary success of putting NWICO on the agenda of UNESCO in 1976 was a result, on the one hand, of the economic forces the non-aligned countries gathered in the early 1970s and on the other hand, of the cold war division between the Soviet Union and United States which made non-aligned countries an important force to win over. However, NWICO fell apart on exactly the same grounds. When the United States recovered in the early 1980s from its economic crisis, political scandal, and military impasse, the necessity of keeping the dialogue moving quickly diminished. Multilateral dialogue on NWICO lasted for a short period of around a decade before the United States drew out from UNESCO in 1984. It was not coincidence that NWICO outlived its parallel appeal NIEO for only a short period of two years. NIEO, put onto the agenda of the UN in 1974, two years earlier than NWICO, failed in 1979, when the North refused to acknowledge that all different aspects of NIEO were interrelated at UNCTAD-V in Manila. The collapse of Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union around 1990 removed the last barrier for the Western capitalist expansion. At the Gannett Foundation Media Center's Conference on International Communications in 1991, UNESCO's Director-General Federico Mayor, after presiding in UNESCO for four years, was able to address the American audience of his achievement in having completely buried NWICO, whole-heartedly devoted himself and UNESCO to the doctrine of free flow of information, and fulfilled his early pledge to return the UNESCO to its early role.

Four geopolitical stakeholders were identified in the multilateral negotiating process of WSIS: the alliance between transnational companies and their political agents as the first force, the civil society groups as the second force, the NICs as the third force, and the comparably isolated countries as the fourth force. The first force dominated the geopolitical scenario much more than the NWICO period. Its negative influence on democracy was mainly articulated by the second force arising from the same geographical spectrum. The socialist camp was almost completely erased from WSIS political process. Attempts to look for an alternative to capitalism, regardless of a better one or worse one, either met with Waterloo (in the case of Soviet Union and China) or remain suppressed by the first force (in the case of Venezuela). North Korea and Cuba were classified into the fourth force, together with the Sub-Sahara Africa, as the isolated players in globalization process. Most of the developing countries were either integrated into or anticipating joining the capitalist global market system. Despite the newly gained assertiveness of the third force at WSIS, their primary concern may not necessarily be democratization of information but has a large chance to be competitive ability of commerce, not broad benefits of the majority but narrow interests of the national elite. As late-comers in a hierarchical global capitalist system, democratic scenarios in the third force such as China, India, and Brazil were threatened by the increasing income gap between rich and poor and by rising hunger for resources. China realized that time was an important factor to lift itself higher in the global market food chain. Practically, China learned within its Confucian culture sphere from the experiences of four little tigers (Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan,
and Singapore) and Japan which had escaped from the center-periphery deadlock by transcending this relationship to other countries.

Theoretically, China attempted to follow a simple flying geese development theory proved effective by these economies. Kaname Akamatsu (cf. Saburo, 1979: 1102) invented such a theory by proposing four stages of development: A country (1) starts as an exporter of primary products and importer of simple manufactured goods. It then (2) becomes an exporter of these simple manufactured goods as it (3) begins importing more sophisticated industrial products. Finally, (4) it begins exporting these advanced products. By transplanting a hierarchical economic relationship into China and other countries at the lower level of food chain, countries such as Japan and South Korea pushed their way out from the center-periphery relationship. Taking advantage of an authoritarian political regime, China voluntarily imposed on itself an unequal economic relationship, as highly efficient as it’s suicidal, across the nation along urban/rural and eastern/western dimensions. Development priorities tremendously favored the urban/eastern area and discriminated against the rural/western area. In addition to this imposition of a biased relationship, attracting foreign investment became the sole criterion in measuring the political achievement of local officials. Efficiency-oriented economic growth at the cost of equality, justice, and environment has lasted for 30 years, raising China from a low-key participant in the NWICO debate to a comparatively high-key opinion leader (willingly or not) in the WSIS debate. Together with India and Brazil, a like-minded group of large developing countries took shape at the WSIS political process, behaving more assertively than other developing countries at the WSIS summits. Embarrassingly, their power as a third force at WSIS was, on the one hand, commissioned by global capital, and on the other hand, originated from domestic capital attempting to carve out some space of survival. The initial capital accumulation process for the national enterprises in these counties is arguably no less cruel than the Encirclement of the UK. Despite glaring economic growth rates, these new engines are deeply flawed by their inner problem of rich-poor gap. This led a former Brazilian President to comment that “Brazil is doing well, but Brazilians are not” (cf. Tehranian, 1999: 289). The same comment may also be applied on China and India. It is safe to conclude that the political stakeholder at WSIS, from developed countries and developing countries, have a rough consensus on a capitalist way of development, with a few exceptions like North Korea and Cuba.

Secondly, the process from NWICO to WSIS reflects the shifts of dominant academic paradigms in the field of international communication.

The paradigm shifted from development communication of the 1950s and 1960s, then to cultural imperialism in the 1970s and 1980s, and back to development communication after 1990. Sociologically, development communication links itself to modernization theory suggesting that developing countries can replicate the successful experiences of the West by transferring Western technologies, “breaking the traditional cultural barriers to progress, democratizing their polities, liberalizing their markets, and encouraging foreign trade and investment” (ibid, p. 29). It holds that the media can serve a general purpose of modernization. Development communication had its day in the 1950s and 1960s. Its practices in the developing countries especially in Latin America did not yield anticipated goals. Its counter view, the cultural imperialism thesis, gradually gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s. Cultural imperialism thesis relates itself to dependency theory and world system theory suggesting that the diagnosis offered by modernization theorists could only produce a more dependent status, economically and culturally, on the developed countries. This paradigm was replaced in the 1990s by development communication, rearticulated as
information society theory or globalization theory. The power of technology is again being glorified as omnipotent. It is also widely but dogmatically believed that there is no alternative to liberal democracy. Sparks (2001) synthesized these shifts of dominant academic paradigms by proposing twelve key changing components and representative scholars of each paradigm. According to Sparks, Schramm and Lerner are the representing scholars for development communication, as Schiller and Nordenstreng for cultural imperialism and Robertson and Waters for globalization. The main forum hosting the debate on development communication and cultural imperialism is UNESCO, and since 1990s, the main forum has shifted to WTO, WIPO, and ITU.

It needs to be noted that the meaning of the same concept like development communication, modernization, information society, or globalization theory differed widely between liberals and leftists. The proposed meaning of the same concept was sometimes diluted to accommodate differing views. Bearing in mind such a purpose, Tehranian (1999: 25) used the concept modernization to “mean a process of change that puts a primary value on scientific, technological, social, economic, political, and cultural innovations in order to achieve progressively higher levels of productivity, democratic participation, and cultural pluralism” without conditioning it on the infinite perfectibility of humans, the absolute power of human reason, the historical inevitability of progress, or the total rejection of tradition. Servaes (1999: 52-3) introduced the concept of multiplicity to reconsider “the more economically and politically oriented approach in the modernization and dependency paradigms.” The multiplicity paradigm argues that “development is an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from society to society” and that “there is no universal development model.” Reflecting on the failures of the earlier paradigms in coordinating economic growth and social justice, this new paradigm attempts to “approach problems of freedom and justice from the relationship of tension between the individual and the society, and limits of growth are seen as inherent to the interaction between society and nature.” Treasuring sustainability, cultural identity, and self-reliance, this understanding of the relationship between development and communication fundamentally differed from the mainstream views.

Thirdly, the process from NWICO to WSIS reflects the interactions between intellectuals and politics.

Occurred in this process were two key overlapping points between the political and intellectual tracks. The first important overlapping point was the year 1976, when cultural imperialism thesis proposed by some Western intellectual elements was picked up by Non-aligned countries and moved onto international political arena. Seen from NWICO politics, cultural imperialism was turned into mantra “serving political agitation rather than scientific analysis” (Nordenstreng, 2001: 155). Reflecting on the lessons that cultural imperialism and NWICO was distorted both by the West which interpreted a North-South conflict into a West-East battle and even in some Southern nations which nationalized domestic media in the name of combating imperialism, the intellectual elements in the NWICO debate has largely stripped themselves from hard politics and moved towards grassroots activism. Media reform movement has a good chance to become a key member of global civil society movements, together with environmental, feminist, peace, human rights movements. As witnessed in the WSIS political process, many other mobilizing forces adopted media and communication as their second area of concern. This was evident in the campaigning slogans like environment & ICTs, gender & ICTs, human rights & ICTs, etc. However, in spite of being acclaimed as an important stakeholder, they were
rejected as a disqualified political force without decision making power. Yet they constituted the second force at WSIS in opposition to the dominating world political powers whose marriage with academics dated back to the year 1980 when the information society thesis was politicized to serve the policy agenda of politicians.

The year 1980 was the second important overlapping point. Information society thesis and its technological approach in particular became another mantra. The power of its alliance with political and market forces was fully released in the 1990s and verified at the WSIS political process. These intersections between intellectual elements and other forces indicate that academic ideas are often used by political, market, or grassroots civil society power to serve a purpose. Normatively, intellectuals carry with them the responsibility of making ethical judgments of right or wrong, and measure their achievements with such a standard. Keeping distance from moral judgments often leads to half-baked social science. The intellectual tradition of taking a moral position based on empirical evidence remains alive in the critical political economists behind the cultural imperialism thesis. They did not hesitate to express their sympathies for the Non-Aligned Countries whose decolonization initiative arose from their century long bloody struggles against colonial powers. Since the retreat of colonial powers, it did not take much time for the newly independent countries to find what a legacy their colonists left. Their traditional national borders were intentionally or unintentionally distorted, their cultural linguistic heritages were announced backward, and the natural ecology they used to depend on for a living was over-exploited. There was one weapon which they can use to start bargaining with their former masters and rebuild their nation: sovereignty. This was where the findings of the critical communication scholars lent support. Relating international communication to national sovereignty was one of the examples supporting an information decolonization offensive.

Though being condemned as helping totalitarian regimes more than weak countries, cultural imperialism theorists scored both morally by making their position explicit and academically by setting up a preliminary conceptual framework for further exploration. Despite the sophistication in building their thesis around technology, the record of information society theorists in history awareness and taking moral position was rather poor. Technology had a notorious role in the colonial age. Guns, cannons, ships, and railways were tools to conquer, control, and exploit. As long as the moral deficit remains unpaid, the fears of these images remain intact in many souls. Perhaps exactly due to the colonial history, technology achieved a divine and formidable status above ethics across the world. The selective silence of information society theorists about this part of history can be doubted. Their discourse almost solely focused on how technologies brought out in the West an industrial society and how ICTs conjured up an information society. By focusing on information as an inexhaustible resource rather than a commodity in a structurally unfair international trade system, the ideas of information society theorists became an easy prey to the ambitious neoliberal business expansionists, consisting mainly of formerly colonial powers (the first force at WSIS) but joined by some new economic engines (the third force). For neoliberal elements in the countries of the third force, the history of Western colonialism was, at best, used tactically in bargaining for narrow interests of national elites or, at worst, totally brushed aside as if it never happened. Economic growth became an end rather than a tool. Efficiency took priority over fairness. A global capitalist empire was able to take shape.

Information society/globalization theorists fed into the global system badly needed justification. The resounding yelling, plight, and fury from the majority were either
ignored or regarded as a price that had to be paid for development. Globalization writers sometimes wrongly understood the majority appeals for justice, equality, cultural space as resentment against the rich. While British historian Hobsbawm correctly observed a globalizing reality when he wrote that “as the world is integrated in one way by globalization, it is increasingly divided in another way into a permanently inferior majority of states and a privileged and self-satisfied minority of states” and “this minority enjoys a self-reinforcing superiority of wealth, technology, and power,” he incorrectly used the word “resent” when he wrote that “such superiority and complacency are just likely to be resented now as they were in the old days of imperial supremacies” (cf. Lull, 2007: 1). Not denying the contribution of the potential role of capital in reducing poverty, such a saying completely took for granted the anti-democratic record of transnational capital descending from the colonial past, its erosion of diversity of indigenous cultures, and its relationship with wealth of the privileged minority. The status of such views as mainstream, like the official adoption of Huntington’s clash of civilizations as orthodoxy, gives some explanation for military over-reactions of 2003 Iraq war towards 911 terrorist attacks. All of these were embedded as part of the background of WSIS.

The process and outcome of political and academic interactions at NWICO and WSIS shed insights into Lazarsfeld’s early administrative versus critical division of communication research/scholars. In Lazarsfeld’s mapping, administrative communication research is “carried through in the service of some kind of administrative agency of public or private character;” however, critical communication requires the study of the general role of media in the society “prior and in addition to whatever special purpose to be served” (1941: 169). The authority of this division was endorsed by both administrative and critical communication scholars. Rogers (cf. Severin and Tankard, 2001) re-baptized the early division into a critical versus empirical division. In his mapping, critical researchers often adopt totalistic conception and relate media issues to broad social issues; empirical researchers often employ quantitative surveys and data analysis as methods, sharing great similarity with natural sciences but often sacrificing the broad social background of media issues. Smythe and Van Dinh (cf. Babe, 1993) detailed the differences between the two types of researchers in terms of the types of problems selected, the research methods employed, and the treatment of results. Windahl and Signitzer’s terming of differentiation is critical theory and applied theory. The former “seeks to expose underlying problems and faults of media practice and to relate them in a comprehensive way to social issues, guided by certain values;” the latter “aims to harness an understanding of communication process to solving practical problems of using mass communication more effectively” (cf. McQuail, 2005: 12). Severin and Tankard (2001) observed that critical scholars tend to criticize empirical scholars that they incorrectly apply the physical scientific methods into humanity and society, that their focus of research is too narrow, and that they neglect the influence of media ownership and control, while empirical scholars tend to criticize critical scholars that they draw conclusion before presenting evidence, that they replace research with debate, and that they keep repeating some basic conceptions without adding new knowledge.

Reminiscent of Lazarsfeld’s dividing line of critical versus administrative, McQuail (2005) knitted other dimensions to understand communication theories and theorists: media-centric versus society-centric, culturalist versus materialist, humanistic versus scientific, and qualitative versus quantitative. Chapter 2 and 3 of the thesis respectively introduced the dominant academic paradigm (cultural imperialism thesis) and political process (three forces) of NWICO. At the academic level, the debate on
the cultural imperialism thesis between critical political economists and cultural studies scholars was essentially an inside family debate among critical researchers and the findings of latter are academically a helpful complementation of the former. At the political level, however, the active audience thesis lent badly-needed support to a free market approach of global media regulation. This led Maxwell (2000: 95) to lament that “those of us who immersed ourselves in this debate have so far produced only one outcome: we’ve forgotten who our common enemy is.” Chapter 4 and 5 respectively introduced the dominant academic paradigm (information society thesis) and political process (four stakeholders) of WSIS. The academic debate on the validity of an information society thesis between information society theorists and critical political economists synthesized the division between critical and administrative scholars. Politically, the information society theorists well served the dominating first force of developed countries and the less dominating third force of NICs, with a fourth force of the LDCs watching bewilderedly; whereas the challenging second force of civil society groups attempted to provide a counterbalance against a colossal political and market machine by applying progressive thinking into areas of environment, human rights, media, and so on.

The power balance between these civil society groups and the world political/polity, however, was out of proportion, and fundamentally flawed by the fact that the civil society force, from the discourse itself to their representatives, is an outgrowth of Western domestic polity following the expansion of global capital. Facts like these not only cast a dark shadow of WSIS, but also, I will argue later, raise questions about the ideas of critical political economists. It may even be concluded WSIS was the retrogression instead of progress of history. In spite of all the shortcomings of the debate on NWICO, from the lack of people’s participation to over-politicization, it has at least succeeded, through then debate and afterward hindsight, in raising people’s awareness of the imbalance in global news flow and the inequality in the distribution of communication resources, and most important of all, the reason that results in such a situation. The central conclusion of the MacBride Report was that “the utmost importance should be given to eliminating imbalances and disparities in communication and its structures, and particularly in information flows. Developing countries need to reduce their dependence, and claim a new, more just and more equitable order in the field of communication. This issue has been fully debated in various settings; the time has now come to move from principle to substantive reforms and concrete actions” (cf. Mansell and Nordenstreng, 2006).

The journalist movements parallel to NWICO were able to write in International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism that “the journalist operates in the contemporary world within the framework of a movement towards new international relations in general and a new information order in particular. This new order, understood as an integral part of the New International Economic Order, is aimed at the decolonization and democratization in the field of information and communication, both nationally and internationally, on the basis of peaceful coexistence among peoples and with full respect for their cultural identity” (Prague and Paris, 1983). With notable exceptions like ITU’s Missing Link report in 1984 and UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, little progress was made during the NWICO-WSIS timeframe. At WSIS, the political will and academic attention put behind the issue of information imbalance seemed to be tremendously weakened and shifted to the bright prospects of ICTs. Digital divide was at best an invented excuse, or at worst bypassed. A WSIS-style technological approach may well result in even widening gaps between the underprivileged nations and groups and the privileged ones. This in turn makes it more difficult for democracy to take roots in the LDCs.
6.2. A Chinese View

In a nutshell, the debate over democratic media governance has moved from the South-West political negotiation over information decolonization through NWICO to civil society’s challenge to a wide political/market alliance at WSIS. Viewed from Galtung’s schematic division of society as made up of three pillars: “first, the State and related governmental institutions; second, the Market and related property and commercial phenomena; people and citizens, or the Civil Society, apart from the two preceding spheres” (cf. Hamelink and Nordenstreng, 2007: 225-6; see also Galtung, 1999: 4), this means the media reform activists are now searching for alliances from other similarly-minded and well-organized groups in the grassroots to negotiate with the State and the Market for democratic global media governance whereby media can be established as the fourth pillar of society, stimulating transparent dialogue by “making information publicly available and by giving representatives of the three pillars space and time to state their views” (Galtung, 1999: 21). Obstacles to becoming a four pillar exist in all three directions. The media are often: “to State through censorship, subsidies or for fear of being punished by lack of access to sources; to Capital (market) through ownership or advertising money; and to Civil Society by catering to popular tastes, real or imputed, for violence, sex and scandal” (ibid: 10).

Hamelink and Nordenstreng (2007) borrowed Galtung’s triangle in their discussion about the nature of society and media-society relationship and agreed on the choice of democracy as the central premise for media governance and policy-making. Descending from this central premise, they suggested the notion of communication rights as the normative guidance of media guidance. Communication rights are those human rights “codified in international and regional human rights instruments” pertaining to “standards of performance with regard to the provision of information and the functioning of communication processes in society” (ibid, p. 234). From these items, they developed four key principles of communication rights: freedom, inclusiveness, diversity and participation. According to them, freedom constitutes the core of communication rights and it is “proclaimed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights… (and) extended to international law in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19), in other UN treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 13), and in all three main regional human rights instruments (Africa, the Americas and Europe)” (ibid, p. 234).

These four principles of communication rights can be read as a crystallization of the human rights provisions of an earlier paper that Hamelink (2003) prepared from a more global perspective for WSIS I, in which he ran a breakdown of these provisions with four dimensions: technology, culture, politics and economy. He then emphasized the importance of establishing a human right to communicate to remedy the defects in the existing human rights provisions. At WSIS politics, this effort was strongly opposed by the US government and the pro-industry civil society group such as World Press Freedom Committee. It is not surprising that the notion of communication rights was used in Hamelink and Nordenstreng joint chapter on democratic media governance published in 2007. Three levels of abstractions were used in their attempt to define democratic media governance. The abstraction ladder goes from democracy sitting on the top level, then to communication rights sitting on the second level, and to human rights provisions at the lowest level.

I take issue with all the elements of this abstraction ladder to propose an alternative
way of thinking for a purpose of both complementing and criticizing this seemingly Western-biased model. In contrast to Hamelink and Nordenstreng’s proposal of democracy as the central premise for media guidance, I propose an alternative premise or purpose of communication: harmony. I firstly explain the Chinese linguistic meaning of this word, and then connect it with another word communication, and finally integrate the two words in the thinking of Daoism school of Chinese ancient philosophy. Harmony (和諧) in Chinese is made up of two characters, “和” (read: He) and “諧” (read: Xie), each of them is respectively a combination of other characters. On the left side of “和” is “禾” (read: He), which means “plant or plants,” and on the right is “口” (read: Kou), which means “mouth or mouths.” On the left side of “諧” is “言” (read: Yan), which means “speak/speaking” or “word/words,” and on the right of it is “皆” (read: Jie), which means “all or everybody.” Literally, harmony (和諧) comes into being when every mouth is sufficiently fed (food for all) and everybody has freedom of expression (words for all). A more hieroglyphic and ancient way of writing plant, mouth, word, everybody is respectively: “禾,” “口,” “言,” and “皆.” “和” and “諧” are synonyms, can be used independently but are often used together to mean harmony, peace, concordance, match, etc. They express the idea that having sufficient food to eat produces some harmony, having the freedom to speak produces some harmony, and combined together they produce a greater harmony. The fact that “和” is put before “諧” does tend to indicate that feeding mouth takes certain priority over expressing with mouth.

Yet, this should not to be confused with the contemporary Chinese propaganda that development takes priority over democracy and human rights as shown in its indifferent saying “Who wants democracy and does it deliver food?” (cf. Zhao, 2005: 57). When questioned about the Chinese human rights record, the former Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Li Zhaoxing responded with a rhetorical question: I had the experience of being starved, so I know what human rights are. Did you have the same experience of being starved? His saying was enlisted in China as the most notorious words in 2007 because it was exactly the malpractices of the then Chinese authoritarian political regime deprived people of their land and contributed the Great Starvation period in the early 1960s. Harmony as a core cultural value had long been abandoned. From 1949 onwards, the popular concepts have been as diverse as socialism, communism, Marxism, imperialism, capitalism, nationalism, liberalism, modernization, and democracy. These are all Western ideas, some imposed on China by force and some voluntarily adopted. Their effects on China (all of the terms are now widely used in China) descending from the late 19 century may be accused of cultural imperialism. China turned to the extreme left for complete egalitarianism then to extreme right for sole economic growth but had never attempted to look back to its own culture for nutrition. This is not to argue that the foreign conceptions such as communism and capitalism produced disasters in China but to argue that the swinging between these extremes in China may be better avoided when such conceptions are sufficiently linked to traditional Chinese cultural and intellectual values. Harmony is revived here to function as the purpose of communication.

Nevertheless, the linguistic implication of the first-food-then-word order in the word harmony is complemented by other evidence. When writing about how to rule (govern, herd) the people, Guan Zhong (around 725-645 BC), Law School thinker and politician, wrote that “it is difficult for the people to distinguish between honors from dishonors before they have sufficient food to eat and clothes to wear” and “it is difficult for them to practice etiquettes before their barns are filled with sufficient grains.” In the same writing, he pointed out that “those who are good at ruling a nation start with creating wealth for its people” and “once the people are wealthy, the
ruling then becomes possible and easy” (Guan, Volume Herding the People). Understood from a Chinese context, first attention should be assigned to reducing poverty and satisfying the basic needs of the people. Article 1 of Declaration on the Right to Development shared a similar meaning in its statement that “the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized” (UN General Assembly resolution 41/128, 4 December 1986). UN Millennium Development Goals chose “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” as the number one goal, which consists of “reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day” and “reduce by half the proportion who suffer from hunger” (Millennium Summit, 6-8 September 2000). In “our common vision of the information society” part, term 2 of Geneva Declaration of Principles stated that “our challenge is to harness the potential of information and communication technology to promote the development goals of the Millennium Declaration, namely the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger” (Document WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/4-E, 12 December 2003). In this sense, guaranteeing people’s basic needs (the most basic goal of development) does precondition freedom of expression (the most central principle of human rights). Obviously, fulfillments of basic needs and freedom of expression are only the literal linguistic elements of harmony. They are necessary but not sufficient conditions for harmony whose meaning remains ambiguous. This is a linguistic interpretation of harmony.

The concept of harmony connects to another concept – communication. The Chinese counterpart for communication is “交流” (read: Jiao Liu). While communication in its Latin origin (communicatio) “did not signify the general arts of human connection via symbols, nor did it suggest the hope for some kind of mutual recognition” and picked up those dynamic elements only after “it entered the English language in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries” (Peters, 1999: 7), communication, in a completely different Chinese context, is a pure verb, which literally means “mutual flow.” It is made up of two Chinese characters: “交” and “流.” More specifically, “交” (read: Jiao) anciently written as means “two persons put their necks and legs together to form one” (Xu, ca. 58-ca. 147 CE); whereas “流” (read: Liu) written as means “the flow of water.” Thus, combined together, communication (Jiao Liu) means “mutual flow.” The key character among the two is “交.” In combination with other characters, it acquires other meanings such as intercourse (mutual sex), exchange (mutual change), traffic (mutual connection), intersection (mutual point), talk (mutual converse), etc. In a Chinese Daoism philosophical context, communication is a key dynamic process to achieve harmony. Parallel with other schools of thinking – Confucian School, Law School, Military school, the Daoism school thinking is mainly represented in three books: the I Ching (2800-2737 BC), the Dao De Ching (551-479 BC), and the Zhuangzi (370-301 BC). These works all attempted to articulate a totalistic view of the world through explaining the dynamics of various forces. They came to represent part of the inner core of the ancient Chinese cosmology. I Ching, also known as the Book of Changes, focused on the ideas of “the dynamic balance of opposites, the evolution of events as a process, and acceptance of the inevitability of change” (translated by Wikipedia). The ideas of I Ching were summarized by Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) as:

The Supreme Polarity is born of Non-polar. The Supreme Polarity moves and produces Yang. When the movement has reached its limit, stillness ensures. In stillness, the Supreme Polarity generates Yin. When the stillness has reached its limit, there is a return to motion. Motion and stillness alternate, each being the root of the other. By distinguishing Yin and Yang, the Two
 Modes are therefore established. The alternation and combination of Yin and Yang generate Five Agents: Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth, and their harmonious interactions through Five Vital Breaths in turn give birth to Four Seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. In this process, the Five Agents are simply Yin and Yang; Yin and Yang are simply the Supreme Polarity; the Supreme Polarity is fundamentally Non-polar...The Dao of the Heavens produces maleness, and the Dao of Earth produces femaleness. The Two Vital Breaths (of maleness and femaleness), reacting with and influencing each other, change and bring the myriad beings into being. Generation follows generation, and there is no end to their changes and transformations.

The *Dao De Ching* statement of this process is that “Dao (the Way) gave birth to unity (One). Unity gave birth to duality (Two). Duality gave birth to trinity (Three). Trinity gave birth to the myriad creatures. The ten thousand things carry Yin and embrace Yang. They achieve harmony by combining these forces” (*Dao De Ching*, Para. 42). Here, I would only attempt to explain two concepts: the Supreme Polarity and the Yin Yang binary principle. As indicated, the Supreme Polarity is a state produced by Non-polar. Non-polar means the infinite, formlessness, the emptiness, namelessness, the earliest origin, or the beginning state of the universe. The Supreme Polarity has different names: a supreme Ultimate, an eternal Truth, an eternal Name, or an eternal Dao. *Dao De Ching* began with a widely disputed statement that “道可道，非常道；名可名，非常名。” Dozens of English translators of the book interpreted this statement as “the Dao that can be told is not the eternal Dao; the Name that can be named is not the eternal Name.” This showed a tendency of treating Dao (the Way) as God in an English context. While quite a number of Daoism researchers tend to subscribe to the interpretation of Dao as God, and the author of the book, Laozi, as a prophet, most of the Chinese scholars held heavy doubts.

By tracing the grammatical and textual evidence, Zhao Tingyang (1993) translated the beginning sentence this way: “if there is a Dao we can follow in a certain pattern, it is not the eternal Dao; if there is a Name we can speak in a fixed pattern, it is not the eternal Name.” According to him, Laozi did not mean that an eternal Dao is impossible to be told, and the sentence conveys that there are two states of Dao: Dao that can be followed in a certain way and Dao that is eternal. This is not to indicate that the latter, an eternal Dao, cannot be followed. Nor does it indicate that there are two types of Dao, one is comparatively shallow, the other more complicated, or there are two levels of Dao, a lower one in more accordance with phenomena, a higher one with the essence. Very simply, it is to indicate that an eternal Dao can not be followed in a fixed pattern, in a stubborn method. It is to indicate that an eternal Dao can not be expressed with a word or name; therefore, Dao is employed for convenience. “The Dao that can be followed in a certain pattern is an expression of various fluid versatilities of an eternal Dao; an eternal Dao is exactly this state of versatilities.” In Zhao’s opinion, Laozi intended to introduce “ought to be” (an eternal Dao) through “to be” (the Dao that can be followed in a certain pattern). Laozi did not reject the plural states of Dao. What he rejected is a stubborn fixation on one of these states.

Laozi seemed to say that there are many versions of truth; an eternal truth travels in these versions; a stubborn fixing on one version of it should be avoided at all costs. Thus, Laozi wrote that “fill your bowl to the brim and it will spill; keep sharpening your knife and it will blunt” (Para. 9). Diversity and plurality are highly treasured terms because they mean more possibilities of permutation and combination. The pitfalls in singular form of words need to be cautioned. Science, culture, society, language etc become dangerous words calling for a plural expression. Thus it is rejoicing to read that diversity is enlisted by Hamelink and Nordenstreng as the
number three principle of communication rights. “Worldwide, existing forms of
cultural, informational and linguistic diversity are seriously threatened” and “diversity
in all of these areas is as critical to the sustainability of the planet as the world’s
biological diversity” (Hamelink and Nordenstreng, 2007: 235). The discussion of
diversity naturally invites a question: What is the minimum guarantee for diversity?
The answer offered in the Daoism classics is a number: two, namely Yang (male
principle) and Yin (female principle). Yang in Chinese stands for all the active sides in
the binary logic: male, husband, son, sun, sky, hardness, aggression etc. Yin in
Chinese stands for all the receptive sides in the binary logic: female, wife, daughter,
moon, earth, softness, retreat, etc.

Yang as an active principle needs the reception of Yin. If we let Yin keep receiving
without reciprocating, then Yin runs the risk of reaching its limit which will rebound
in an extreme manner, the first sign of a vicious cycle. When someone proudly
announces that there is no alternative or there is an end of something, it means one
side has over-stretched itself. A rational choice is to keep a reasonable balance
between them. “What does it mean that success is as dangerous as failure” (Para. 13)?
“When a country falls into chaos, patriotism is born” (Para. 18). Three points are
meant here. 1) The existence of one is conditioned by its co-existence with the other
the way the existence of maleness is conditioned by its co-existence with femaleness.
2) This duality (Two, like Yin and Yang) constitutes the minimum requirement for
diversity. This point overlaps with the first point in that the word co-existence can
involve more than two components. Two is the bottom line of protection. This accords
with the fact the God ordered Noah to bring “two of all living creatures,” male and
female, onto the ark. Reserving only two rings the bell of emergency. The burning
smell of an eyebrow is already in the air. 3) The more diversity there exists, the more
meaningful it becomes for each of its members. The full prosperity is thus more
sufficiently promised. Viewed from these three points, the value of the word
communication is manifest. Under the ancient Chinese cosmology, communication
(only as a verb in Chinese, or in English, to communicate) summarizes the
characteristics of all the three points: at least two sides, mutual dynamic flow
(two-way traffic, exactly what NWICO strived for), and the potential extension to
include others. Considering this dynamic nature, shifting from the Right to
Communicate to Communication Rights is an academic loss, though politically such a
compromise seemed necessary.

Under the Yang and Yin duality, it is also important to take note of how widely the
Western cosmology differs in this point, so different that it constitutes a Yin-Yang
duality with the Chinese cosmology. Galtung (1992:13-15) analyzed occidental
cosmology and its influence on news communication in six themes: space, time,
knowledge, nature, persons, and the transpersonal. 1) In terms of space, “there is a
Western inclination to see the world as divided into three parts: Center, Periphery, and
an outer periphery.” 2) In terms of time, “there is a tendency in the West to believe not
only in progress, but also in the possibility of a crisis, and after that crisis some kind
of Enduzustand, a final state of affairs, or catharsis.” 3) In terms of knowledge, “there
is a general inclination in the West to see knowledge in terms of atomism and
deductivism, a tendency to present reality in a fragmented, scattered way, dividing it
into small bits that can be understood and ‘digested’ one at a time.” 4) In terms of
nature, “the occidental theme of person-over-nature is reflected in turning nature into
a nonactor…” 5) In terms of persons, there is a tendency to see people according to
two general occidental themes, individualism and verticality, joined synergistically in
competition: who is best, who is the worst, who is the winner, who the loser?” 6) In
terms of the transpersonal, “a perennial occidental theme sees humans as subordinate
to the supernatural, the Supreme Being.” These six aspects that Galtung identified are direct opposites of the Chinese cosmology. I detach myself from the word oriental since oriental more or less means non-Western, and what is non-Western contains as tremendous differences. As mentioned above, Dao (the Way) seems to be a state of fluidity of other states of fluidities. “Dao cannot be perceived. Smaller than electron, it contains uncountable galaxies” (Para. 32). Because of this nature, “Dao cannot be grasped.”

In the aspect of knowledge, while the Western thinking starts from the bottom, from the individual, from the details, and from atoms, the Chinese cosmological logic starts from the top, a totality, a whole, a unity, a system, or one. “The Master views the parts with compassion, because he understands the whole” (Para. 39). The meaning of one differs in Chinese and Western logic. One in the West is the smallest undividable unit, a human being for example. In the Daoism philosophy (and in fact other Chinese schools of thinking), one means the totality. This totality is created by Dao. “Dao gave birth to one (corresponding to the English word unity).” The opening of Castells’ *The Rise of the Network Society* quoted a dialogue between Confucius (the first teacher in China) and his student Zi-gong. “Do you think me a learned, well-read man?” “Certainly,” replied Zi-gong. “Aren’t you?” “Not at all,” said Confucius. “I have simply grasped one thread which links up the rest” (Sima Qian, 145-c89 BC). Clearly, there is a serious mistake in the English translation of the answer of Confucius. The reason for this mistake is because the English translation inserted the word “thread.” By dropping this word out of the sentence, however, the English translation sticks to the original meaning of Chinese. Thus, it should be translated as “I have simply grasped One which links up the rest.” “One” (in Chinese written as “一”) is often used as a philosophical concept to mean, as mentioned above, a total or a whole. Confucius attached great importance to this methodology. Castells quoted the mistranslated sentence from Hu Shi and he himself carried no responsibility for the mistake. It was, however Castells’ choice. Arguably, shrinking “one total” down to “one thread” fits well into Castells’ methodology. Castells indeed followed a totalistic view. It is the incline of adopting a thread of technology to explain the total rather than using of a total to explain technology that needs to be questioned (Chapter 4 discussed this point). Not to forget that Confucius, virtually in all his writings, also preceded a totalistic view with Dao which has two dynamic states: those that can be followed in a certain pattern (to be) and the one that is eternal (ought to be). For Confucius, the reason for a totalistic view is to serve a normative principle: Dao. He is in consistency with the Daoism School of thinking. The number one task for a teacher along the Chinese teaching tradition is to convey to his students the meaning of Dao. “Teachers are those who “convey the Dao, explain a profession, and solve confusions” (Han, 803). Castells intentionally avoided any normative articulation.

Castells’ central argument that “our societies are increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the Net and the self” does not stand well when challenged by duality or Yin/Yang principle of Daoism. Above all, the Net and self do not even constitute the Yin/Yang duality. The Net is only one of the many agents for the interactions between the self and many other selves. But Castells is correct, in a Daoism perspective, in his describing of the dominant forces and many challenging ones. Nevertheless, what in question here is that, in terms of knowledge, Chinese cosmology starts from the normative/the total to interpret the rest while Western cosmology starts from the individual and then moves on to seek the total. In the aspect of space, the Chinese cosmology treats duality/co-existence of two as the smallest units for survival. While the Western cosmology has the division between good and evil, the Chinese one dissolves this distinction at the very beginning. “Dao gives birth
to both good and evil” and “both saints and sinners” (Para. 5). This is a matter of perspective, of naming. “Naming is the origin of all particular things” (Para. 1). “When people see some things as beautiful, other things become ugly” (Para. 2). Since this is only a matter of naming, there is no necessity to eradicate the evil. The human-resulted disasters in Chinese history were produced around the dispute over who are sticking to Dao and who are not. Dao must be followed. When the emperor lost the Dao, the people have the right and obligation to rise up to make adjustments. The judgment is based on whether the road in the middle is followed, thus letting everybody to live. In order to observe the world, one needs to retreat back to the moment before the world is born or the position of a “new-born child” (Para. 10).

Harmony means a natural dynamic balance between two sides, is the way to stay in the middle. The enemy of harmony is domination. “Whoever relies on the Dao in governing men doesn’t try to force issues or defeat enemies by force of arms because for every force there is a counterforce; violence, even well intentioned, always rebounds upon oneself” (Para. 30). “As it acts in the world, the Dao is like bending of bow. The top is bent downward; the bottom is bent up. Dao adjusts excess and deficiency so that there is perfect balance. It takes from what is too much and give to what isn’t enough. Those who try to dominate, who use force to protect their power, go against the direction of the Dao. They take from those who don’t have enough and give to those who have far too much” (Para. 77). Dao De Ching concluded with “the Dao nourishes by not dominating and by not dominating, the Master leads” (Para. 81). This origin of not dominating people comes from the notion of not dominating the nature. Vice versa, the domination of nature leads to the domination of human beings. Chinese paintings often depicted in the huge mountains or above rivers a small figure of human, if there was depiction of human at all. In the aspect of transpersonal, human beings were not put under a Supernatural Being. Learning plain philosophy used to be part of the Chinese everyday life the way going to church used to be an integrated part of the life in the West. Thus, on the top, the Chinese way of thinking is one ladder lower than the Western way, in that it contemplates the world from a philosophical perspective of Dao rather than from a Supernatural Being of God; at the bottom, the Chinese way of thinking is one ladder up than the Western way, in that it regards two persons as the smallest unit rather than an individual. Due to this, in the aspect of persons, there was very little notion of individualism in Chinese cosmology. Daoism School of ideas gives the bottom line of two (Yin and Yang) for the survival of anything. This was later developed by the Confucian thinkers into family values.

To sum up, a comparison a Western and Chinese cosmology in these six aspects seemed to indicate that they constitute one of the many examples of Yin-Yang composition. “To communicate” means numerous Yin-Yang instances interact for the purpose of harmony or peaceful co-existence. Both democracy and freedom are tools subordinating to such a purpose. It is ironic that the twice-phased WSIS, paralleling with the Iraq war, would unreservedly promote freedom of expression as a fundamental principle. Secretary General Kofi Annan asserted at his opening speech that “the right to freedom of opinion and expression is fundamental to development, democracy, and peace, and must remain a touchstone for our work ahead.” Even Hamelink and Nordenstreng, key academic proponents of NWICO, have made a visible shift from their strong reservations about the negative freedom of expression to a proposition of freedom as the core and number one principle of communication rights in media policy-making. Their positioning of the value of democracy as a central premise for media governance contains a large element of truth. It needs to be noted, however, that, at the academic level, democracy is only one version of many truths and needs to be met with other versions for improved understanding, and at the
political level, its longest practice in the West did not bring disbarment in the world. Quite on the contrary, perspectives such as conflict and clash become the dominating perspectives of looking at each other. Without sufficient mutual understanding between cultures, religions, and civilizations which might be achieved through real communication, democracy runs the risk of being stigmatized by one nation’s democratic decision to use force on the others while freedom of expression runs the risk of becoming the freedom to criticize atrocities only after the atrocity occurred. Therefore, the universality of values of human rights and democracy needs to be founded on the diversity of their jury members. In this sense, the Right to Communicate, as a dynamic process serving a normative principle – One, surviving on a mutual reciprocity of information – Two, and striving for a maximum protection of diversity – multiplicity, should not be compromised.
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