

**MEDIA GLOBALIZATION AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON NATIONAL COMMUNITIES:
EVALUATING M. McLuhan's CONCEPT TODAY**

**ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЯ СМИ И ЕЁ ВЛИЯНИЕ
НА НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ СООБЩЕСТВА:
К СОВРЕМЕННОМУ ВОСПРИЯТИЮ
КОНЦЕПЦИИ М. МАКЛЮЭНА**

*Dmitry L. Strovsky, Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor,
Chair of Media History,
Faculty of Journalism, Ural Federal University,
Ekaterinburg, Russia
strovsky@mail.ru.*

*Дмитрий Леонидович Стровский, доктор политических наук, профессор,
кафедра истории журналистики,
Департамент "Факультет журналистики",
Уральский Федеральный университет,
Екатеринбург, Россия
strovsky@mail.ru.*

It was Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan who seems to have been first in introducing the frameworks of the theory of media globalization. However, since then (the early 1960s) there have been many discussions about the effects of this process, which continue to this day due to numerous contractions that arise in the course of modern information transformation. Following the agenda of the international conference "Media Readings 2013" held at the MGU's Faculty of Journalism, the author tends to carefully discover the pros and cons of different approaches to the theory of media globalization and its consequences for modern national societies. The analysis is based on numerous scientific investigations concerning the current situation. Diverse scholarly approaches confirm that technological breakthroughs currently taking place, which seem to be productive for

fruitful national developments, are likely to increase confrontations between countries because of the great imbalances that have already appeared in these relationships. Therefore, the McLuhan's concept still provokes discursiveness and can be applicable to different trends in the humanities.

Key words: *communication process; media audience; post-industrial society; information market; technologically advanced countries.*

Канадский социолог Маршалл Маклюэн был, пожалуй, первым исследователем, попытавшимся основательно очертить параметры современной медиаглобализации. И хотя с момента зарождения его концепции (в начале 1960-х гг.) прошло немало времени, сам процесс глобализации и сегодня продолжает динамично развиваться, что активизирует современные дискуссии об его влиянии на состояние СМИ. Следуя повестке дня, предложенной в рамках международной конференции Media Readings 2013, проведенной на факультете журналистики МГУ, автор стремится исследовать различные научные подходы применительно к теории медиаглобализации и ее воздействию на современное общество. Изучение «теории вопроса» базируется на большом числе научных источников, по-разному рассматривающих влияние медиаглобализации на современный мир. Очевидно, однако, что этот процесс не изжил противоречий и духовного дисбаланса между различными странами, имеющих место в ходе нынешней информационной трансформации. Поэтому научная концепция М. Маклюэна по-прежнему стимулирует дискуссии по отношению к различным сферам гуманитарного знания.

Ключевые слова: *коммуникационный процесс; аудитория СМИ; постиндустриальное общество; информационный рынок; технологически развитые страны.*

Introduction

This article concerns the process of evolution for media globalization in the modern world during the last few decades and stimulates the analysis of critical approaches relating to this matter. It was a Canadian sociologist, Marshal McLuhan, who in the early 1960s was likely first in trying to introduce a scientific context for this notion, which was initially coined by him as information globalization. Listing the works by McLuhan (McLuhan, 1962, 1964), one would hardly notice any criticism for his part in evaluating this occurrence, which started to impetuously develop at that time. This scholar considered media globalization and the global information village as a benefit to mankind through new technologies, thereby providing universal social progress to all communities. More accessible information, following McLuhan, was aimed to enlighten and educate people in the hopes that it would allow them to overcome the growing contradictions in the world.

Nowadays, half a century after the invention of McLuhan's theory (being admitted by him as not a pure theory but, to that extent, as mostly a set of scientific perceptions), some of his predictions have yet to come to fruition. With certain technological achievements, mankind came across new challenges, witnessing that media globalization can, at least, be questionable on the most pivotal issues such as equal access of all nations to information and the social benefits taken from this process. Consequently, scholars continue to debate how to perceive media globalization and what extent the latter seems to be fruitful for peripheral countries. This discourse has been amplified lately due to political problems inevitably appearing in different countries in the form of stark confrontation. The anti-globalist movement that has become extremely active in the world is one more confirmation of the disagreements between the political elite and the citizens who consider the current situation in the world as being far from positive for the interests of all nations. Thus, globalization generates certain social and political problems, which seem to question McLuhan's initial upbeat assessments.

The main goal of this article is to prove that despite McLuhan's rose-tinted reflections, media globalization does not seem to be a politically neutral phenomenon; on the contrary, it is based on pure ideological priorities of different political actors. It provokes discussion of the question concerning the *substantial essence* of media globalization and the possibilities of its influence on national societies, which seems to be of interest in the different fields of the humanities.

Information society: following theoretical frameworks

Scientific and technical backgrounds influence the dissemination of information throughout the world and shape the current media environment. This process is stimulated by more than just a seemingly unstoppable increase in the general number of print media and broadcasting companies that facilitate a more active penetration of mass information into the social consciousness. The dynamic progress of computer technologies and, in particular, of the Internet as well as an occurrence of various data programs operating within its frameworks (such as Skype, ISQ, etc.) and an active transaction of print mass media in electronic formats, attract the attention of the younger audience to media texts – all of which shape new ways and forms of information development, making information itself extremely influential. The availability and efficiency of media information today becomes immeasurably more absorbant compared to the information in traditional mass media.

Information, therefore, can be visualized as a specific phenomenon of our reality due to the penetration of information into all “pores” of society, which predetermines the everyday behavior of all actors of the social reality. This situation, being truly unique against the background of a preceding evolution of mankind, determines the core essence of the society of information. The concept of this uniqueness began developing in human investigations as early as the 1970s, which was basically related to the impetuous development of information technologies including personal computers as a pure reflection of this situation.

Some authors (Bell, 1973; Boyd-Barrett, 1977) referred to the state of the international community at the time as *post-industrial*, meaning that the new stage of development of the universe turned out to be entirely different in relation to the traditional industrial priorities that had dominated previously. The appearance of information, in this context, does not seem to be a usual form of industrial activity but is characterized as a new phenomenon of production and consumerism. Quite close to this was the comprehension of such American researchers pursuing world socio-economic transformations as Peter Drucker (Drucker, 1973) and Nico Stehr (Stehr, 1994). They named the penetration of computer technologies as a clear reflection of post-capitalist society or the *society of knowledge* by implying that having grasped new information, people immutably become more sophisticated. Remarkably, Stehr referred to knowledge as being a 'black box' by highlighting its continuous changing social nature and the human inability to fix this nature in a consistent way. Yet he admitted that the society of knowledge as a 'decisive phenomenon' was born on the principles of modern technologies (Stehr, 1994: 92).

Leaving apart reflections to the degree that these words may be considered as being universal for all countries, it is obvious that the scientific world from the beginning tended to brand the existing changes, behind which were pivotal transformations in the field of production and development of information. These algorithms predetermined the creation and evolution of a new information environment being named the information society.

According to the author's understanding and definition, this society must be understood as a system of socio-political relations, the development of which depends entirely on searching for and processing information as well as the creation of technological opportunities for its rapid dissemination. These frameworks appear essential in taking managerial and administrative decisions, providing the system with opportunities to function effectively.

Over the last few decades, the priorities of the information society were given attention by a large number of academic observations. This

can be explained, partly at least, by fashionable research trends, which were generated within this context and focused on what were initially unusual definitions. Simultaneously, one would not deny the sincere commitment of the scientific community to understand the nature of the information society, being closely associated with many areas of human cognition and affecting various phenomena of contemporary life.

In the early 1980s, Robert Kling, an American professor in social informatics, even initiated at Indiana University the emergence of the journal *The Information Society (TIS)*, a key critical forum for leading edge analysis of the impacts, policies, system concepts, and methodologies related to information technologies in addition to changes in society and culture. The publication still continues today. For over 30 years it has been observing the interactivity between the social and technological worlds, as well as future prospects from this convergence. The magazine's focus on both the technological and social elements of the information society is clearly demonstrated in its first issue, where an article by William Colby appeared, the then Director of the American CIA. Shortly thereafter the journal became an intellectual anchor for researchers from many Western countries by publishing articles on a range of issues relating to intercultural exchange in the information sphere. In assessing nowadays the overall content of *Information Society*, it is possible to claim that its editorial staff seem to be confident that most disagreements in the political, economic and social spheres can be overcome, one way or another. Although many publications highlight the problems of the information space, the latter is treated as being imperfect towards mostly computer technologies rather than to the "human factor," which seems to be much more pivotal in overcoming current problems.

One more deficiency concerning the information society is determined by the modern reality of illustrating the point as mankind seems to be incapable of processing the existing quantities of information and gets "suffocated" from its abundance. In addition, an increasing flow of information did not make people more humane and successful in dealing with current issues of the day in many pivotal fields such as

ecology, war and peace, poverty, terrorism, etc. Despite the increased informative awareness, the international community is not efficient in formulating rational and truly effective ways leading away from crisis situations.

In connection with this, several pivotal questions can be put on the agenda:

1) Whether the expansion of technical capacity, including the area of mass communication, is a good incentive for the world community, or if it threatens public security as a whole and of certain countries in particular.

2) Does (or shall) the current situation lead to the dominance of technologically advanced countries over others which, in turn, creates unequal opportunities for information development between people in the world?

The above questions raise the issue of information responsibility, which affects many countries. This makes the existence of progress itself perceptible, as being dependent on information flow makes it possible, to some extent, to predict the future of mankind. Meanwhile, if the answers on the above questions are affirmative (“yes, it does” and “yes, it is leading”), then it is assuming that the current situation seems to be potentially dangerous for human development as such, creating problems for the survival of peripheral nations.

Technical progress in communication, which became very observable over the last two decades, originated from the globalization process. Despite its apparent simplicity (stemming from the word “global”), the term of globalization looks complicated. It is frequently used but less often properly explained (at least, in Russian academic sources), and therefore, the definition itself still seems to be vague and devoid of rigorous reasoning (Vartanova, 2005: 9). It is worth saying that globalization itself is understood as a specific environment within which geographical limitations of social and cultural activities are supposed to be overcome, and business activity as such begins to be multidimensional and multifunctional. It is obvious that globalization opens new horizons for

receiving and distributing information and thereby significantly changes the communication landscape as Yassen Zassoursky stressed more than a decade ago (Zassoursky, 1999). At the same time, globalization makes more clear the deepest contradictions occurring in human beings while penetrating the modern social reality (Savrutskaya, 2004). Consequently, this process can be regarded as the integration and unification of cultural, as political and economic dominants being reflective in the entire transformation of society. One of the most influential in this regard is the unification of information flows. Messages created by diverse sources of information being linked with each other become more unified and, to the very much extent, standardized (Yershov, 2010: 81). Media globalization is therefore greatly determined by the increasing volume of information (which looks even more evident in modern conditions due to the unification of media sources) and new technological possibilities for its creation and distribution.

All this, in turn, creates new symbols affecting the behavior of individuals. Thanks to advancing computer technologies and wireless communication, every individual becomes not only a part of a greater society, but is also able to independently influence minds and emotions of other people (numerous cases of hacking against information systems of high profile banks leading to fluctuations in the world financial market provide a good example). Simultaneously, under the influence of a renewed information environment, the international community has been confronted with a number of new specific cultural and ethical phenomena changing the spirit and mentality of society.

Among these phenomena is, for example, the narrowing of the consciousness of the mass audience, which significantly changes its requirements and simplifies its perception of reality. This is commonly seen in the example of Russia. Thanks particularly to the efforts on the part of television, providing the audience with similar programming (soap operas, talk shows, and so on), the Russian population absorbs almost the same samples of behavior, which are not always of the best quality. Thus, the mass audience is still firmly implemented with the

idea that a successful individual is, first of all, someone who has money and power. The way in which this money is earned does not seem to be the issue. Substantive unification of Russian TV channels disseminating information spots produced on the basis of foreign priorities brings both the blurring of moral and ethical norms of conduct in the minds of the audience and substantial aggression. The author is not prone to agree with Russian scholar Yevgeniy Tavokin who considers a modern man absorbed by global information as the one cutting out sensitive perceptions of the real world and losing his ability to self-critically analyze current events (Tavokin, 2005: 135). In the meantime, to ignore the impact of this information on the minds of the individual means to simplify the phenomenon of media globalization. It is worth admitting that the media content being suggested now is the most diverse it has ever been in the history of mankind. For instance, instead of a few TV-channels being accessible about a quarter century ago viewers can now switch on hundreds of them (Bakulev, 2005: 148-149).

All of this clearly confirms that media globalization cannot, at least, be treated with a one-sided (positive/negative) position. This is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is still waiting for further thorough examination in the academic environment. However, it is clear that the phenomenon of globalization stems not only from the development of scientific and technological progress, but also from specific social and political backgrounds. This is worthy of sorting out due to the underestimation of this factor in modern humanity research on media globalization, which is mostly focused on technical innovations rather than on the investigation of the social evolution.

Media globalization: the contours of the evolution

It would be incorrect to consider media globalization as being initiated only by modern history. This process was predetermined by the entire historic evolution of the press. Referring to the processes during

the time of information globalization, especially *electronic colonialism*, Thomas McPhail (McPhail, 2010: 18), following his predecessors (Reis, Trout, 2001; Napier, 2004), believes that it was preceded by a few purely global periods of shaping social progress, which later generated the information space. The first period, he says, carrying on until the end of the first Millennium A.D., can be envisaged as military colonialism due to the subjugation of new territories. This was then replaced by Christian colonialism (up to the 1600) following the spread of the Roman Catholic Church as far as it could reach which, in turn, gave way to mercantile colonialism that continued for three and a half centuries: from the 1600s until the 1950s. And only in the mid-20th century was the world absorbed by the above-mentioned electronic colonialism, characterized by the presence of principally new sources of processing and disseminating information. Repeating for each era the word of colonialism, McPhail claims that all of these lengthy periods witnessed the physical and spiritual expansion of one force over another. The time of electronic colonialism, being completely different, is characterized by a powerful penetration of information, which is much more devastating than conventional forces (ibid).

Leaving behind the discussion as to what extent the word “colonialism” seems to be appropriate, it can be argued that media globalization has to be understood only within the overall development of social and economic relations. These relations gradually strengthened the power of those who were seeking new markets. Therefore, globalization itself from the outset was marked by the eagerness of media owners to capture new territories and to expand zones of their influence, which dates back as early as the 17th century. The process itself started, as we see, long before computer innovations and was defined by the industrial revolution in Europe (that took place in 18-early 19th centuries). French philosopher Henri Saint-Simon, followed by British philosopher Herbert Spencer, argued that the industrial society resulting from this revolution, for the first time in human history, has become a type of unified, cohesive system, in which individual parts of it were entirely aligned with each

other. Within the industrial society, all of its elements were compounded together by communication (Thussu, 2006: 40).

When referring to communications, one would mostly mean facilities (such as roads, bridges, overpasses, etc.). However, scientific and technological progress has also led to the development of media communications, making them not only as a material product but also as a specific cultural product of society. The active concentration of media initiated by European and American owners in the mid 19th century reflected the overall dynamics of financial shifts. The evolution of information was moving towards its appearance as a specific type of good within the system of economic activity. An information product was gradually becoming more pivotal for unifying participants in the market (Mattelart, Mattelart, 1998: 8–10).

The press in the second half of the 19th century and later actively published financial advertising information, which helped adopt various business decisions. It is also important to emphasize that this time was initiated by the active development of social, cross-cultural and spiritual ideas. It was the media who were enlarging the market for themselves, becoming an intellectual engine for different social groups. No other socio-political institution such as political parties, the church or the army were able to become a similar source of motivation for these groups.

Information was not only contributing to more intensive competition between manufacturers, but it was also gradually becoming a commodity with a definite purchasing cost. Consequently, mass media, while remaining the same in structure in a formal way (it was still far from the appearance of media holdings), rendered an increasing influence on the development of society.

More real steps towards the globalization of media were made during the formation and evolution of the first news agencies that emerged in the 18th century. News agencies from the very beginning processed messages from the foreign press, following the sale of this information to the print media. Later, the agencies started gathering news from abroad (through the network of their correspondents). Those successfully operating in

the 19th century were the French agency *Havas News*, the German *Wolff* and others. Soon after, working with information became exposed to the influence of commerce, and news agencies began to increase their domination. For example, in the early 20th century Reuters had exclusive coverage of events in Canada, India, in most of the Far East as well as in Australia, New Zealand and in their African dominions (Boyd-Barrett, Rantanen, 2005: 71). The same can be said about other information agencies such as the *United Press International* (UPI) and the *Associated Press* (AP). In parallel with this process was the concentration of media ownership through which the owners were able to monopolize the right to collect and disseminate public information.

These trends became particularly noticeable in Britain in the late 19th century. Essentially the entire national press (which at that time consisted of about a dozen newspapers being distributed throughout the country) was concentrated in the hands of only three owners, Lords Northcliffe, Rothermire and Beaverbrook. These tycoons also largely controlled the provincial media. After the death of Northcliffe, Beaverbrook annexed his media empire of almost fifteen newspapers circulating in various counties. In the meantime, the media arena was penetrated by other owners (for example, the Barry brothers in the early 20th century purchased several national newspapers). However, the changed mediascape did not radically alter the national media market, being limited with only a small number of proprietors.

It restrained the diversity of opinion on public matters and formed a picture of the world not on the basis of its objective development but according to the political and economic interests of a few masters. The dawn of the process for the concentration and monopolization of media ownership already confirmed a pivotal trait of media globalization, i.e. *strong dependence by the information market on tough political and economic trends that seem to have been presented in the form of real social needs* (for example, attachment of society to scandals and its unrestrained interest in the lives of celebrities, etc.). It cannot be denied that these needs did exist (otherwise it was unlikely to attract mass attention to the media).

Nevertheless, in the course of the globalization of media, they deliberately were reinforced by the owners to shape the consciousness of the audience, the so-called average values. The concentration and monopolization of the market were inevitably leading to another vivid expression: the commercialization of mass media as one more component of globalization. Noticeably, an increasing unification of media content resulted in more vivid diversity in design (which followed due to greater media competition) at a cost of reducing the analytical standard of the outlets.

Meanwhile, globalization in the media sphere as an independent phenomenon developed in the first half of the 20th century, when media ownership in several countries (especially the United States and the UK) had crossed national borders and had come to develop actively on an international scale. This process was leading to the disappearance of the so-called independent and liberally oriented media. The above trend was strengthened even more in the 1950s, when many newspapers or television channels started to exist within media holdings, which accumulated the individual media outlets. In fact, this tendency displayed the development of tough market competition, which was anticipated by some scholars as a natural way for national evolutions, the only way “to understand economic behavior and the only sure means to achieve efficiency” (Crouch, 2007: 261). It is only under this efficiency that the competitive sector could keep naturally evolving (Glyn, 2007: 38).

One way or another, this period was naturally marked with the merging of some media companies, which became a pivotal engine for all technological innovations and simultaneously for the intrusion of the media business into foreign markets. A striking example of this was the penetration into the world media market of the *International Publishing Corporation* established in London and headed by Cecil King. The word “international” in the company’s title clearly demonstrated King’s desire to reach global information industry. He indeed succeeded. By the end of the 1960s this corporation controlled four national British newspapers with a total daily circulation of 15 million copies, along with periodicals in Australia, West Africa, and Western Asia (Heren, 1992: 57).

Even more instructive was the empire *News Corporation*, which began its climb to the top of the international media business in the 1970s. The information interests of the corporation boss Rupert Murdoch have far gone beyond print media (even if his newspapers get released in many countries). Murdoch gradually acquired a movie company, *20th Century Fox*, a publishing concern, *HarperCollins Publisher*, in addition to his supervision of a number of print and publishing industries. In the late 1980s, *News Corporation* actively intervened in the cable TV market, creating it as a zone of its influence on five continents. Already at that time it became clear that Murdoch threatened political pluralism on different national media markets. A similar activity, perhaps only in slightly less volume, was promoted by Italian *Fininvest*, Japanese *Sony* and some others.

To date, there are not less than a dozen companies that have significant influence on the development of the international economy. Some of them are engaged in the creation and distribution of media products only. Ten media giants in the beginning of 21st century were listed among the 500 leading companies worldwide by an income level of 10-25 billion US dollars per year (Bykov, 2003: 78). Now this number has increased further. There are also companies such as *Time Warner*, *Disney*, *Sony* and some others, which, in addition to their media business, are actively integrated into different areas of the economy. For instance, *Lohnro International*, which runs about two-dozen provincial British newspapers, has business operations in the automotive, steel, mining, real estate and insurance markets, as well as others. The German corporation *Bertelsmann* also owns different brands and properties that are not directly related to media production. This multi-vector activity is developing around the world, and such examples are numerous. It is likely to assume that media owned by large industrial and financial structures are not the most profitable businesses. However, they serve their tycoons as a so-called “informational shield” by creating, one way or another, a favorable image of their holdings and interests. Thus, in the context of globalization, the media have become the promoters of not only their

interests, but also of the significantly more absorbing interests of their owners. They are integrated into the overall economic positions of their owners and thereby gravely affect the millions of people who consume this information. Consequently, globalization itself visualizes many important trends of modern consumerism. It is worth remembering such blockbusters as *Baywatch*, *Dallas*, *All in the Family* as well as many others, which one day brought this trend into existence. They became promoters of a particular fashion, behavior and interpersonal relationships to a huge audience around the globe.

Under these circumstances, the extension of the media space and its infiltration into other areas of activity, domestically and internationally, has clearly determined the *expansion of some cultural values into other cultures*. “We live in the era of new cultural conditions,” wrote Hong-Won Park in the late 1990s, “that are characterized by faster adoption and assimilation of foreign cultural products than never before” (Hong-Won Park, 1998: 79). As of late, this trend seems to be developing even more intensively than during those years, and it has become a logical consequence of information globalization in today’s world. On the one hand, this situation is fundamentally changing the traditional views surrounding media content and its impact on mass and individual consciousness, and on the other, it provokes new discussions on the pros and cons of media globalization in the contemporary world. In order to examine the concept of media globalization more thoroughly, it is worth critically sorting out the positions of both sides.

Envisaging global effects: the “leftists” vs. the “positivists”

It is worth stipulating that the division between the “Leftists” and the “Positivists” seems, to a large extent, conditional. However, their use in the present context appears to be justified as these definitions illustrate two global scientific trends regarding media globalization. We refer to the “leftists” as those who are directly or indirectly denied and

keep denying a positive role of globalization on the existence of media. In turn, the “Positivists”, as it follows from the term itself, have a more balanced attitude to the existing processes. Certainly, in a pure form these differences are unlikely to exist due to the inevitable mental and spiritual transformations that every researcher goes through during his or her scholarly career. However, the division between the so-called “Leftists” and the “Positivists” is illustrative for understanding the core of the discussion on media globalization and its outlines.

Investigations concerning the prospects and effects of the above-mentioned cultural intrusion through media globalization have not recently started. As early as 1920 there was already a suggestion that images created by and through the media led to the shaping of a new background. Some researchers even tended to prove that the picture of the universe created due to new business affiliations in the media sphere, had, in fact, little in common with real practice. The pioneers of this theory were American scholars Walter Lippmann (Lippmann, 1922) and Harold Lasswell (Lasswell, 1927), who, by means of sociological studies, were proving that the media can change people’s consciousness. They both stressed that the media were able to do it without visible pressure on the minds and feelings of the audience. This judgment, no doubt, has lost none of its relevance today. We see nowadays how quickly through the media that politicians manage to change political views and values of the electorate. Lasswell, talking about the information process, later referred the mass media to the term of enlightenment as an antipode of coercion (Lasswell, 1948: 3–10). He thereby meant that media could not forcefully impose thoughts and emotions upon individuals, which was similar to what McLuhan told later. However, even under the banner of enlightenment the media have successfully created specific images affecting society. Lasswell, perhaps, understood it much better than McLuhan who seems to have believed mostly in a positive future for society.

Lippmann and Lasswell were likely the first in seeing information as being closely connected with more global, cultural and political priorities affecting media content. This approach has been practically

evolved in the late 1940s, with the start of the Cold War and the division of the world into two rival camps: the “developed socialism” and the so-called bourgeois democracy. In these conditions, socialism was visualized by Western media as a political system that was hindered from the full development of freedoms due to rigid ideological constraints. The bourgeois democracy, in turn, was portrayed as a combination of qualitatively different values that are repeatedly alleged to have been directed at being “maximally complete” in informing the audience on all major issues of the day. It is indicative that after World War II the information theories in the West developed a scientific approach, figuring out that the process of media globalization is more likely to maintain the peaceful evolution of mankind.

Observations of media development in the West, especially the USA, in the 1940s were developing according to a “campaign for the truth”, initiated by the then American President Harry Truman. This campaign was carried out under the auspices of the Marshall Plan aimed at the recovery of Western Europe, which had been devastated during World War II. The proposed strategy was seen as a challenge to Soviet policy and its information strategy developing not only in the USSR but also in Eastern Europe (Thussu, 2006: 18–23).

Meanwhile, many overseas experts in communication at that time and later on were not supportive of this conservative political concept. Harold Innis (Innis, 1972), Armand Mattelart (Mattelart, 1979), Oliver Boyd-Barrett (Boyd-Barrett, 1977), Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus (Hoskins, Mirus, 1988) seem to have been adhering to the “leftist” position. What precisely were their arguments?

The supporters of the ‘leftist’ approach at all times believed that ideology defined the willingness of developed countries to “enslave” the rest of the world. They followed a purely materialistic approach regarding the history of evolution of world civilizations. According to this view, the transnational corporations, being mainly concentrated in the northern part of the world (in the Anglo-Saxon world), affected peripheral countries by establishing specific rules in the international

market and, consequently, by enhancing their political and economic domination in different regions of the globe. Indeed, the media became part and parcel of empires as early as some decades ago and played a crucial role in creating a form of pressure, which was coined as cultural imperialism (Guback, 1969; Conradi, 1971; McPhail, 2010). It was done by imposing certain human values on international society, which ignore or more often undermine the existing national cultures.

The effects of manipulation through the global media as a subordinate part of their industrial and economic interests continued to be investigated in the 1990s by a great number of Western academics, including James Curran (Curran, 1991), Michael Gurevitch (Gurevitch, 1991), Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Chris Newbold (Boyd-Barrett, Newbold, 1995), Andre Frank (Frank, 1998), Richard Haass (Haass, 1999), David Harvey (Harvey, 2003), and Ben Bagdikian (Bagdikian, 2004), etc. They all admitted the controversial and ideologically oriented nature of media globalization and saw it as a primary condition for the domination of some values over the others. As one of those academics, Graham Murdock, noted in the late 1980s, communications construe their own realities, “through particular expressive forms” and “through the practices of everyday life” (Murdock, 1989: 136). These words seem to be vital today.

Supporters of the leftist reflection remain active. This can be explained by the tradition of Western political science, promoting for many decades critical thinking in building human knowledge and by the current media landscape, which clearly reflects the process of universal globalization.

Being in accord with leftist researchers that such globalization does not seem to be politically neutral, it is worth stating that their statements turn out to be too simplistic. In fact, the media render influence on mass consciousness but do it in a more subtle form than claimed by the above academics. The media intrusion into people’s minds and feelings seems to be more specific under which the direct impact more often gives way to hidden media manipulation (Yermakov, 1995; Mel’nik, 1996). Manipulation does create a background for maintaining illusory reality but it would be unfair to consider it as only recently being personified.

This is the main reason why some Western scholars traditionally take a more tolerant position towards the effects of media globalization – by considering them as non-detrimental. Media have traditionally been observed as being non-independent, but also not fully undermined by political and economic pressures. According to these investigations, media, in general, seems to be progressive for human development due to their constant promotion of cultural priorities, making people more satisfied about information.

Among the ‘positivists’ actively promoting this idea since the early 1960s was Marshal McLuhan. He pioneered with his books *Gutenberg Galaxy* (McLuhan, 1962) and *Thinking about the Media* (McLuhan, 1964), the content of which was partly devoted to his observation of the global information village. This village, in McLuhan’s thoughts, seems to be purely a virtual notion, which could appear only on the basis of the development of the information society as a privilege of human development. According to him, it is the information society that has created a background for the global information village. Such a village is a clear benefit for the world community as it brings together remote territories, linking them mentally and spiritually. Following this, globalization becomes the backbone of social progress because it shapes new opportunities for different countries in obtaining comprehensive and trustworthy information. McLuhan made it clear that under these circumstances the political process becomes more democratic and beneficially affects the fate of human civilization.

McLuhan’s concept became widespread and found many supporters. The works published about the same time by Daniel Lerner (Lerner, 1958) and Wilbur Schramm (Schramm, 1964) clearly confirm that the idea of media globalization seems to have penetrated onto the pores of the international academic community.

In the late 1950s, Daniel Lerner published his book *Passing the Traditional Society* based on his study of the mass audiences in Turkey, Lebanon and other Arab countries. In his research, Lerner substantiated the existence of a direct relationship between the spirits of information and

the shaping of consciousness of the audience. Western society, he claimed, provided the most advanced model of social attributes such as power, health, skill and rationalism. It was the West that eroded foundations of traditional society and will continue to influence the development of the modern world. Thus, according to Lerner, the cultural diversity that is present in the world continues to play this role but only up to certain limits. The West has already become a hegemonic power bearing the responsibility for defining the information vector of human development (Lerner, 1958: 47-48). Essentially, Lerner has anticipated the further development of the information process, by noting as early as half a century ago a key problem of the modern socio-cultural development.

A second American researcher, Wilbur Schramm, in his book *Mass Media and National Development*, published in the mid-1960s, took the pattern of cohesion between ideas proclaimed by the media and the behavior of people. The mass media's main task, pointed Schramm, is to accelerate and facilitate the transformation of society, without which economic innovations cannot engage in development (Schramm, 1964: 27). Like Lerner, he indicated that the Western media can play first fiddle in developing countries. These media turn out to be responsible for social transformations due the fact that they bring democratic values. Liberal media as such, according to Schramm, are designated to free people from fatalism and fear of change. They seek to strengthen personal and national start-ups, which should lead to a "better life", as compared to the one that now exists in the developing world. In the meantime, the lack or reduced development of democracy makes the development for the free flow of information, which is unlikely to evolve on a mutually beneficial basis, more difficult (Schramm, 1964: 130-131). It is quite hard not to notice Schramm's neglectful attitude of "alien" cultures, which have to be changed thanks to liberal norms and the penetration of the global media into these "decrepit lands".

In fact, Lerner and Schramm expressed the position of the so-called happy post-modernist who sees, following Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, many kinds of cultural texts circulating internationally, and

people adopting them playfully (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1994: 134). It was questionable even then as to what extent this position was argumentative. However, a favorable attitude towards media globalization, perhaps in a slightly softer argumentation, was subsequently developed in the works by Johan Galtung (Galtung, 1971) and Alvin Toffler (Toffler, 1980).

According to Galtung, the world is becoming more “harmonious” due to the flow of information from the centre to the periphery. Information, while breaking the barriers owing to new technologies, equalizes the cultural opportunities of different nations. Recognizing the impact of the technological advances of advanced countries on the rest of humanity, Galtung perceived this process as being legitimate in the context of the unequal development of national territories (Galtung, 1971: 83–93).

In turn, Toffler described the breakthrough of information as a “third wave” of human civilization, which had replaced the preceding hunter-gathering and industrial stages of world evolution. Toffler named the modern development of mankind as the post-industrial period of unique *information interaction* between countries, standing at different levels of socio-political development. This interaction takes place primarily through the media, which combines intellectual pluralism and therefore makes information easily consumed (Toffler, 1980). Similar views were expressed by W. Russell Newman who also promoted an anthropological evolution of the world society (Newman, 1990). Meanwhile, these researchers have paid very little attention (whether it was consciously or unconsciously is unimportant) to the fact that information pluralism becomes possible only on the basis of equal opportunities between actors living in different parts of the world.

This was most likely due to the belief of the above researchers that the modern world cannot have equal information capacities among the economically developed countries and countries belonging to the ‘second’ and even more so to the “third” world. This statement was based on empirical research. As early as 1969 an American researcher Herbert Schiller published the book *Mass Communication and the American Empire*, where he noted that the dominance of the U.S. in the

field of popular culture, in particular the production and distribution of television products worldwide, seems to be unchallenged (Schiller, 1969). A similar conclusion was made at the same time by Finnish researchers Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis, who investigated the presence of American television programs on foreign television. The survey conducted by them in 50 countries confirmed that these opportunities are undeniable, and no European country can compete with the U.S. in the development of entertainment media. A similar conclusion was made by the same researchers three years later. They wrote that the supremacy of the United States in this direction was made possible by the most dynamic (in comparison with other countries) development of market relations (Nordenstreng, Varis, 1974: 54). It is due to its strong economic development, noted Jeremy Tunstall, that the United States managed to develop its media industry and thereby affect the consciousness of people throughout the world (Tunstall, 1977: 263). These statements confirm that the media are a very powerful tool, which is able to promote certain cultural, ethical and other priorities. Although none of the above sociologists claimed that media globalization seems to be fruitful only for “second-rate” countries, their empirical base became very provable for so-called “positivists” considering this process as an opportunity to “promote civilization”.

In the meantime, it would be, nonetheless, incorrect to assess the flow of information from the West to the rest of the world as motivated only by the idea of “cultural imperialism” (Boyd-Barrett, 1977). Firstly, as John Tomlinson fairly stressed, “audiences are more active and critical, their responses more complex and reflective, and their cultural values more resistant to manipulation and ‘invasion’ than many media theorists have assumed” (Tomlinson, 1991: 49-50). Secondly, and not less important, the Western world, introducing certain spiritual values, did much to raise the general cultural level of local population in various regions of Africa and Asia. It is true that this level is based on global mass culture, which is dominated “by the image, imaginary, and styles of mass advertising” (Hall, 1991: 27). In the meantime, the opening of new

schools, universities and theatres as well as the emergence of new print and audiovisual media became the epitome of the overall humanitarian process aimed at raising awareness of the local population and its exposure to common civilization norms.

In this regard, Marshall McLuhan was probably right in predicting a more circulating world, which provides national communities with practices being closely attached to the fruits of civilization. At the same time, it would be wrong to dismiss the global interests of economically developed countries in different spheres, including mass media and the Internet as an impetuously developing source of mass information. Thanks to new forms of communication, standard images became even more global, and millions of children all over the world seem to know Disney heroes much better than the many others that originated from their countries. In this article the author leaves out the question as to what extent this situation can weaken the usual connections between generations living in the same country and the cultural values of the latter. The example of Russia, as well as many other states, shows that it has become a serious problem, being destructive for their habitual cultural spaces. In the meantime, it is worth saying that the aspirations of the most technologically advanced countries to penetrate with peaceful means into remote national communities are aimed to consolidate the basis of the neo-liberal position while providing these countries with the right to set the agenda for all other participants in the information process.

Today this is confirmed in particular by the penetration of media capital in less developed countries and by the decline in broadcasting of the local product instead airing foreign programs. This can be easily confirmed through the example of contemporary Russia. The commitment of Russian TV channels to media globalization is well perceived through various entertainment programs, most of which duplicate famous Western shows. It is worth referring to the reality show *The Last Hero*. For six years as a replica of the American entertainment program *Survivor*, it appeared regularly on Perviy Kanal (Channel 1). Another spectacular example is the daily show *Dom-2* (being broadcast by the TNT Channel, from May

2004 onwards), which originated from the program *Big Brother*. Although the main heroes of these shows are Russian, the shows themselves are subjected to Western “rules of the game” and therefore do not always relate to appropriate models of behavior historically conditioned in Russian society. During the development of these plots, habitual, moral and ethical attitudes become questionable.

Thus, media globalization seems to be an appealing phenomenon making mass consciousness more primitive – all of which destructively affects the journalistic process. In today’s Russia, under the influence of global transformation, other forms of media action are successively replacing journalism. Through the media, the essence of facts and events turn out to be elusive. Therefore, it is worth agreeing with Pamela Odih, who writes that the accentuation of the social and cultural exclusion, of vast segments of the world’s population from the power centers of global networks, has become a formidable obstacle to sustainable development (Odih, 2010: 16). In fact, Americanized Western culture continues to actively penetrate national borders. Huge money is invested in English language media products, including Internet websites, while the media appearing in local languages are unable to withstand this competition and therefore are forced to close down. Thus, the discursive background for the “Leftists” and the “Positivists” is still being maintained and has room for significant development. Meanwhile, the current situation evokes new provocative activities from anti-globalization groups. The rapid process of subduing local cultures to ‘more active’ cultures and, through it, the unification of national mass consciousness in different countries generates new contradictions, which have never been pondered by McLuhan.

Conclusion

Summing up the scientific conclusions towards media globalization, it is possible to say that the formation of two global concepts, which,

albeit, are conditional in their pure reflections, enable us to fix the main research trends established over many decades.

The *first concept* determines that media globalization serves the interests of only prosperous countries seeking to subjugate “weak” societies by controlling information creation and distribution. As a result, a new level of technologies involved in the media process seems to be devastating for the reality. This logic generated the left-wing academic argumentation, tending to prove that such a situation is leading to an unbalanced situation, destroying the spiritual fabric of “deprived societies” and their traditional values. There is a concern, concludes Thomas McPhail quite recently, that current information, mostly coming to elsewhere from advanced countries and preferably using the English language, “will cause displacement, rejection, alteration, or forgetting of native or indigenous customs, domestic messages, or cultural history” (McPhail, 2010: 18).

During the last few years the above position was also supported by scholars from non-Western countries. This was confirmed at two international research seminars initiated in 2007 and 2008 by the Mass Communications Departments of Mediterranean and Istanbul Universities in Turkey and the Faculty of Journalism at the Ural State (now Ural Federal) University. The panelists spoke much about the necessity for journalistic communities to remember the importance of media traditions in their countries so that their audiences could have better access to domestic information.

The *second concept*, on the contrary, defends the idea of a positive media role in the global cultural process. The adherents of this concept see media globalization as dealing successfully with all political, social and economic problems (Zhuranlistika v mire politiki: issledovatel'skie podkhodi i praktika uchastiya, 2004: 239). In the 2000s, Manuel Castells strengthened this idea. In his well-known study, *Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Castells pays attention to “information capitalism” (as he calls it). Through the permanent exchange of mass information, Castells stresses, technically backward countries become dependent on technologically developed ones, which facilitates mutual information activity (Castells, 2000, 2004).

Meanwhile, serious technological breakthroughs taking place nowadays which seem to be productive for national developments, are likely to increase confrontations between countries because of the great imbalances that have already appeared in these relationships. This problem, in fact, has been ignored by Castells and his followers, who have proved their wish to assess media globalization from a mostly determinist position rather than on the basis of human theory. Therefore, it is still arguable to what extent Marshall McLuhan's viewpoint about positive frameworks of media globalization for peripheral societies is sensible. McLuhan himself could predict neither the disappearance of the bipolar world in the 1990s, substituted with political monogamy, nor the modern political tendencies, filled up with corruption and egocentrism. Contemporary life demonstrates negligence to McLuhan's argument about the "healthy" enlightenment of mankind through technical facilities in favor of the countries that need it most.

The existing differences in evaluating media globalization illustrate a significant amount of controversies inherent in the contemporary world society. Everyday practice demonstrates that the modern environment is still unable to maintain equal opportunities for all countries in obtaining, consuming and distributing mass information. The global information village, as McLuhan's spiritual invention, has become real and perceptive, but it is still being left as some kind of idiom towards the notion of the village, where people indisputably respect each other. And without respect for each other, it is impossible to survive.

References

Bagdikian, B. (2004). *The New Media Monopoly*. 7 edition. Boston: Beacon.

Bakulev, G. (2005). *Massovaya kommunikatsiya: zapadnye teorii i kontseptsii* [Mass Communication: Western Theories and Concepts]. Moskva: Aspekt Press.

Bell, D. (1976). *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: a Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Harper Colophon Books.

Boyd-Barrett, O. (1977). Media Imperialism: Towards an International Framework for the Analysis Media Systems. In Curran, J., Gurevitch, M., Woolacott, J. (Eds.) *Mass Communication and Society*. London: Edward Arnold, 116–35.

Boyd-Barrett, O., Newbold, C. (1995). Defining the Field. In Boyd-Barrett, O., Newbold, C. (Eds.) *Approaches to Media: a Reader*. London, New York: Arnold, 2–7.

Boyd-Barrett, O., Rantanen, T. (2005). Global'niye natsional'niye agentstva novostei: vozmozhnosti i problemy v vek Interneta [Global and National News Agencies: Opportunities and Challenges in the Age of Internet]. In Briggs, A., Cobley, P. (Eds.). *Media: vvededniye* [Media: Introduction]. 2 edition. Moskva: UNITY-DANA, 2005, 66–81.

Bykov, A. (2003). *Sovremennaya zarubezhnaya zhurnalistika: konspekt lektsii* [Modern Foreign Journalism: Lectures]. Ekaterinburg: Discourse-Pi.

Castells, M. (2000). *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Vol. 1, 3*. Oxford: O.U.P.; 2004, Vol. 2.

Conradi, J. E. (1971). Cultural Dependence and the Sociology of Knowledge: The Latin American Case. *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 8(1), 35–55.

Crouch, C. (2007). Neo-Institutionalism: Still No Intellectual Hegemony. *Regulation and Government, Vol. 1*, 261–270.

Curran, J. (1991). Mass Media and Democracy: Reappraisal. In Curran, J., Gurevitch, M. (Eds.) *Mass Media and Society*. London, New York: Arnold, 82–117.

Drucker, P. F. (1993). *Post-Capitalist Society*. London, New York: HarperCollins.

Frank, A. G. (1998). *Reorient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*. California: University of California Press.

Galtung, J. (1971). A Structural Theory of Imperialism. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8 (2), 81–117.

Glyn, A. (2007). *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guback, T. (1969). *The International Film Industry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gurevitch, M. (1991). The Globalization of Electronic Journalism. In Curran, J., Gurevitch, M. (Eds.). *Mass Media and Society*. London, New York: Arnold, 178–193.

Haass, R. (1999). What to Do with American Primacy. *Foreign Affairs*, 78(5), 37–49.

Hall, S. (1991). The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity. In King, A. (Ed.). *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. London: Macmillan.

Harvey, D. (2003). *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heren, L. The Post-War Press in Britain. In Griffith D. W. (Ed.). *The Encyclopedia of the British Press, 1422-1992*. London: Macmillan, 56–62.

Hong-Won, P. (1998). A Grammatical Approach to Interpreting International Communication. *Journal of Communication*, 8 (4), 79–99.

Hoskins, C., Mirus, R. (1988). Reasons for US Dominance of the International Trade in Television Programme. *Media, Culture and Society*, 10, 499–515.

Innis, H. A. (1972). *Empire and Communications*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Lasswell, H. (1927). *Propaganda Techniques in the World War*. New York: Peter Smyth.

Lasswell, H. (1948). Structure and Function of Communication in Society. In Bryson, J. (Ed.) *The Communication of Ideas*. New York: Free Press, 37–51.

Lerner, D. (1958). *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. New York: Free Press.

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York: MacMillan.

Mattelart, A. (1979). *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture: The Ideological Apparatus of Imperialism*. New Jersey: Harvester Press.

Mattelart, A., Mattelart, M. (1998). *Theories of Communications: A Short Introduction*. London: Sage Publications.

McLuhan, M. (1962). *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

McPhail, T. L. (2010). *Global Communication: Theories, Stakeholders, and Trends*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Mel'nik, G. (1996). *Mass media: psikhologicheskkiye protsessy i efekty* [Mass Media: Psychological Processes and Effects]. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University.

Murdock, G. (1989). Cultural Studies: Missing Links, Critical Studies. *Mass Communications*, 6 (4), 255–261.

Napier, D. (2004). *Righting the Passage: Perceptions of Change After Modernity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Newman, W. R. (1991). *The Future of the Mass Audience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nordenstreng, K., Varis, T. (1974). *Television Traffic – A One-Way Street?* Paris: UNESCO.

Odih, P. (2010). *Advertizing and Cultural Politics in Global Times*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Reis, A., Trout, J. (2001). *Positioning: The Battle for your Mind*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Savrutskaya, E. (2004). Fenomen kommunikatsyi v sovremennom mire [The Communication Phenomenon in the Contemporary World]. *Aktualnie problemi teorii kommunikatsii* [Current Issues of Communication Theory]. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University.

Schramm, W. (1964). *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the Developing Countries*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Schiller, H. (1969). *Mass Communication and the American Empire*. New York: A.M. Kelly.

Sreberny-Mohammadi, A. (1994). The Global and Local in International Communications. In Curran, J., Gurevitch, M. (Eds.). *Mass Media and Society*. London, New York: Arnold, 118–138.

- Stehr, N. (1994). *Knowledge Societies*. London: Sage.
- Tavokin, Ye. (2005). *Massovaya kommunikatsiya: sushchnost' i sostoyaniye v sovremennoi Rossii* [Mass Communication: Its Nature and State in Modern Russia]. Moskva: Granitsa.
- Thussu, D. (2006). *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. London: Hodder Arnold Publication.
- Toffler, A. (1980). *The Third Wave*. New York: Bantan Books.
- Tomlinson, J. (1991). *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tunstall, J. (1977). *The Media are American*. London: Constable.
- Vartanova, E. (2005). Globalizatsiya SMI i mass-media Rossii [Media Globalization and the Russian Mass Media]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seria 10. Zhurnalistika*, 4, 9–24.
- Yermakov, Y. (1995). *Manipulatsiya nad lichnost'ju: smysl, priyomy, posledstviya* [Manipulation of the Person: Meaning, Tricks and Effects]. Eka-terinburg: Ural'sky gosuniversitet.
- Yershov, Yu. (2010). Globalizatsiya i modelirovanie natsionalnikh medi-asystem [Globalization and Modeling of National Media Systems]. *Vestnik Tomskogo Universiteta. Seria Philologiya*, 2, 81–88.
- Zassoursky, Ya. (1999). *Informatsionnoe obshchestvo i sredstva massovoi informatsii* [Information Society and Mass Media]. URL: <http://emag.iis.ru/arc/infosoc/emag.nsf/BPA/8237275cd12d039fc32568b10037d11e>
- Zhuranlistika v mire politiki: issledovatel'skie podkhodi i praktika uchastiya* [Journalism in the World of Politics: Research Approaches and Practice of Participation]. (2004). Korkonosenko, S. (Ed.). St. Petersburg: Publ. House "Mikhailov V. A."