International Communication Research

Critical Reflections and a New Point of Departure

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Various attempts (Curran & Park, 2000; Thussu, 2009; Wang, 2011) have been made in recent years to "de-Westernize" or "internationalize" media studies. What justifies another volume seeking to "internationalize" what is purported to be the most "internationalized" subfield in the whole gamut of media and communication studies? In short, it is because international communication as a field of inquiry actually is not very "internationalized." But why should we fix our horizon on "international" instead of, say, "intercultural" communication, or the even trendier "global" communication? First, it should be acknowledged that nation-states remain central to any theories and practice of the contemporary world order, and that international communication is always (but not completely) inter-mixed with intercultural communication. Second, international processes obviously are increasingly globalized. However, we wish to emphasize a double-bind fact: if democracy is to survive in the post-communist world, as Alain Touraine (1997) maintains, it must "somehow protect the power of the nation-state at the same time as it limits that power," for only the state "has sufficient means to counterbalance the global corporate wielders of money and information."

Perusing three major handbooks as signposts immediately discloses that international communication has led a relatively marginal existence in the pantheon of media and communication studies. The more gener-

ous treatment was given in what was legitimately claimed to be the most comprehensive anthology, *Handbook of Communication* (1973), which ran over 1,000 pages under the eminent editorship of Ithiel de sola Pool and Wilbur Schramm. Six out of 31 chapters (approximately one-fifth), all written by political scientists, addressed in whole or in part selected issues of international communication. All the topics nonetheless concentrated on vital Cold War concerns of the United States: international propaganda, Third World modernization, communication systems in primitive societies, and Communist/totalitarian communication systems. There was a sequel after a lapse of 14 years, the *Handbook of Communication Science*, edited by Charles Berger and Steven Chaffee (1987). Amid its self-congratulatory claim to the self-sufficient status of "communication science," this volume turned cripplingly inward-looking. Showing little welcoming gesture to social scientists from other sister disciplines, it devoted only one chapter to cross-cultural comparisons, and none to substantive issues of international communication. An updated *Handbook of Communication Science*, edited by Berger, Roloff, and Roskos-Ewaldsen (2010), devoted only one token chapter out of 29 to "intercultural communication." What comes to mind is local TV news practice in the United States of covering "the world in a minute."

Surely international matters deserve more time, space, and concerted attention. Why have they been so neglected in our field? Asserting the hard-nosed presumption that "science" is of universal applicability, those defining the field through these influential anthologies did not seem to believe that cross-cultural, national, or systemic differences should matter. The world amounted, ontologically and epistemologically, to America writ large. This prevailing stream of (un)consciousness was widely shared among most members of the U.S. social science community for decades, following on Lerner's conviction (1958) that the entire developing world was emulating the American model in a linear progression to modernization. Moreover, well into the 1980s, even as scholars of communication sought to define their realm as one of overweening importance, the field's vision seemed to be narrowing. Even a cursory glance at the table of contents of the three defining volumes shows an inexorable move toward the process of what Geertz (1963) calls "involution," characterized by greater self-absorption, isolationism, internal development, and parochialism—and this in spite of the vast and rapid march of globalizing processes "out there." Under the pretense of science (more aptly, scientism), the succeeding generations of editors have embraced a far narrower horizon of global landscape than their mentors.

At long last, however, the critique of Cold War perspectives that accompanied political ferment of the 1960s and 1970s, the progress of critical cultural approaches to inquiry in the 1980s and 1990s, and above all the growing participation of international scholars in international communication inquiry have generated a search for new directions. We hope this book can contribute to this movement.

Why Internationalizing "International Communication"?

In this introductory chapter I shall refer to the "West" as a generic term to make first-stroke comparisons with the "non-West," bearing in mind that the West is larger than the United States and both "the West" and "the non-West" are internally full of notable variations and conflicts.[1] In other words, we are at this point more interested in understanding the "between variances" than the "within variances." Yet media studies remain, to borrow from Jeremy Tunstall (1977), largely "American" or Anglo-American, and the erosion of this dominance has been glacial. As a field of inquiry born out of the U.S. context of the 1950s, international communication still addresses the world largely through the prism of middle-class America, and the narrow agenda that prevailed for so long—focusing on Cold War propaganda, Third World development, political campaigns, and consumer persuasion—continues to exert its influence through the topics, methods, questions, and very vocabularies of our studies. As Colin Sparks sums up in his chapter, "Lasswell, Lippmann and Bernays in the first generation, and Lerner and Schramm in the second, were all deeply concerned with the ways in which states used the resources of propaganda both to secure internal consent and to undermine the support available to their enemies."

If we were to follow C. Wright Mills's (1959) call for the "sociological imagination," we should stand firm to reject any attempts to balkanize media studies into domestic and international turfs, because in principle all significant questions should be situated in the cross-nexus of comparative (world) and temporal (historical) contexts. But that is not how the academic division of labor or the bureaucratic ethos usually operate. In reality, international communication has been taken as a conceptual extension or empirical application of U.S. communication. Furthermore, it has provided territory for scholarly colonization: as early as six decades ago, Lazarsfeld (1952–53) foresaw that "the domestic area will not have many opportunities" in the years to come and postulated that international research could be a fertile land to "open up new and exciting subjects for investigation."

Rather than taking advantage of the widened window of opportunity to produce "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1983) of general relevance and also in a comparative light, international communication more often than not has acted as an overseas testing station of U.S. or, secondarily, European worldviews.

Moreover, aside from fixating on a narrow range of conceptual problems, mainstream scholarship in our field has long promoted a positivistic methodology that in its extreme form has especially detrimental implications for international communication studies. Hard-core positivists assume that specificities can and should be subsumed into generality, but they seem comfortable with the fact that the supposed "generality" tends to be grounded in a specific U.S. cultural soil or European setting. The "West" is being generalized if not universalized, while the "exceptions" and outliers are explained away and cross-cultural meanings homogenized to the extent of defying the rigor of comparative logic. For many, systemic differences do not seem to be pertinent in the way of impinging on conceptualization or, for that matter, on the relationships between concepts and their empirical referents (Smelser, 1976). Nor is there room for any serious discourse about the crossing of cultural boundaries.

Worse yet, much of the non-West has been socialized to adopt truncated versions of Pax Americana's notion of international communication. U.S.-cum-international communication is taken for granted by way of the hegemonic process, with an army of non-Western disciples eagerly promoting, embracing, and reproducing the generalized model and wisdom from their Western tutors. The popularity of "diffusion of innovation" (Rogers, 2003), which comprised streams of overseas projects trying to copy or replicate models born in the specific settings of Iowa, Ohio, or New York, was celebrated as a seminal cross-cultural achievement.

How much has the situation been improved? Invited just recently to offer comments on papers presented by Asian PhD students at a research symposium, I asked the audience to judge whether we were witnessing a colored, colonized, Asian map of U.S. research trajectories. "Where is, for example, Korea—or Singapore—in scripting the scholarly agendas?" I asked. "Is there a real place to account for cultural flow and interaction?" Stunned to hear my remarks, most students did not seem to possess the kind of cultural awareness needed to feel anything was wrong with lifting a page from the U.S. research directory, asking the same set of technical (even trivial) questions, adopting the same conceptual frameworks, and imitating the same research techniques down to minute details. What could

be faulted, they must have wondered, given that their vaunted display of sophisticated skills was, after all, coached by advanced Western authorities? And this is hardly an isolated encounter.

There is no reason to reject a concept or theory out of hand simply on account of its cultural origin, but it surely is unwise to buy into any theory without reflecting on its built-in premises and limitations. It is one thing to import or apply certain Western models as a critical choice because some problems are appropriate for more generalized lenses. It is quite another to unquestioningly accept a whole set of specific worldviews, problematics, and core agendas to serve a field boldly called "*international* communication." At stake is the "subject position" of academic and cultural inquirers: Who get to ask what kind of questions? Why shouldn't we treasure the right to ask original questions that are most important to us instead of submitting indigenous data or evidence only to further fuel the Western-cum-universal theories? This is a case of academic hegemony par excellence that naturalizes the process of ideological transfer and practical emulation. Hegemony in the Gramscian sense is never equal or simply coerced, but based in part on acts of mutual consent and willing collaboration between the intellectual patron and client, resulting in ideological conditioning in such a way that the fact of domination is unrecognized, accepted, or taken for granted. Hegemony rules unabated unless its fundamental and often hidden assumptions are openly exposed and questioned.

If the trajectory is depressing, the past also yields lessons that can further our attempts to promote wiser, more enlightened, and more cosmopolitan approaches to scholarship. We believe that the imperative of academic autonomy must be founded on active, open, and mutually respectful interaction with cultural currents of thought and interests from other traditions. Symbolizing a critical moment of cultural awakening, this volume intends to do just that and, further, to present alternative and critical discourses about the study of international communication. It is time to develop a more complex and integrated framework of multiculturalism and globalism as a new point of departure. All our contributors have long been immersed in rich intercultural or diasporic experiences, which Stuart Hall depicts as being "familiar strangers" between cultures who "know both places intimately" but are "not wholly of either place" (Chen, 1996, p. 490). Represented in this volume are a group of distinguished scholars from different generations and from an array of diverse cultural backgrounds—Argentinian, Italian, Dutch, American, British, Swedish, Belgian, Israeli, Indian, and Chinese—who have either received advanced training in the

West or affiliated with major Western universities during various periods of their careers. Such "in-between" cross-cultural experiences form an essential part of intellectual biography and capital for them to traverse multiple borders and to dialectically negotiate and synthesize the insider's perspectives with the outsider's perspectives (Merton, 1972), thereby enabling them to emerge from critical reflections with refreshing views on where the field has come from and whither it goes.

Origin and Paradigm Shift

From the outset, international communication research has been affiliated with power and the nation-state, and most particularly with U.S. foreign policy interests and objectives. Setting the tone was Harold Lasswell (1927) in an early work on propaganda technique during World War I. Some 15 years later, social scientists were called on to advise the Office of War Information of the U.S. government in fighting Nazi propaganda during World War II, a war that paved the way for the rise of the United States to world hegemony. No sooner had the world war ended than the Cold War ensued, lasting for half a century. In this ideologically polarized world, in which the United States perceived itself as "a righter of wrongs around the world, in pursuit of tyranny, in defense of freedom no matter the place or cost" (Said, 1993, p. 5), propaganda concerns loomed ever larger.

In retrospect, however, the neo-imperial impetus driving U.S. communication studies was not the only dynamic. The field actually was developing in different institutional settings for different purposes, taking two parallel yet rather separate trajectories. One stream of academic pedigree could be traced back to the University of Chicago in the 1930s and 1940s, where urban sociologists (such as Robert Park and Herbert Blumer) under the influence of pragmatism (John Dewey) and symbolic interactionism (George Herbert Mead) pursued their fascination with the integrative role of the media in the building of community amid large-scale social transformation produced by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. The preeminence of Chicago sociology in U.S. studies of mass communication was replaced in the 1950s by the structural-functionalist school of sociology and social psychology led by Robert K. Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld at Columbia University. At this juncture, domestic communication research came to acquire another character, tenet, and direction as the Columbia researchers turned their primary attention to investigating how the media instrumentally altered voter intention or consumer behavior. Overall they

were collectively frustrated to discover, time and again, that the media did not live up to the theorized expectation of swaying the public's attitudes and behaviors, but only served to reinforce their existing predispositions. As a result, Bernard Berelson (1959), a member of the Columbia group, was on the verge of announcing a funeral for communication research. The transition from Chicago's to Columbia's emphasis (Czitrom, 1982, pp. 91–146; Hardt, 1992, pp. 31–122) has far-reaching implications that provide a domestic counterpoint to the international focus of this essay.

In contrast, coming from a different set of political and intellectual concerns, post–World War II international communication research came to revolve around a circle of MIT political sociologists who were decidedly cold warriors: Ithiel de sola Pool, Daniel Lerner, and Lucian W. Pye. When Columbia researchers lamented, on the *domestic* front, the media's "null effects" in the 1960s, the MIT scholars did just the opposite: they enthusiastically promoted, albeit abroad, an image of omnipotent media capable of shaping *international* propaganda and stimulating Third World development. As an interesting chapter in the sociology of knowledge, how do we account for these diametrically opposing views of media power between the Columbia and MIT schools of thought? Was the discrepancy caused by different ecological conditions of propaganda—for example, what Lazarsfeld and Merton (1971) referred to as monopolization, canalization, and supplementation of mass communication—at home and abroad? To what extent did this gap arise from differing notions of media power? The Columbia group was intent on capturing the manifest, micro-level attitude and behavior change exerted by the media on individuals or groups in the *short* run. Conversely, the MIT group displayed supreme confidence in advocating the cumulative role of the media in cultivating macro-level ideological consciousness and triggering social transformation in the *long* haul. Still, how can Columbia's narrowly conceived empirical findings in the U.S. setting be reconciled with MIT's broadly speculative advocacy in the thick of the Cold War?

The MIT-based international communication research was primarily informed by modernization theory, as conceived by American social scientists with the active encouragement of the U.S. government. Such an approach gained popularity alongside the post-war ascendancy of American political, military, and commercial expansion in the world (Tipps, 1973). Initiated at Columbia and finished at MIT, Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) was generally considered the key baseline work in the area of international development communication. Lerner insisted that

Western countries were simply holding up a mirror for what the developing world aspired to become on the road to modernization, setting out the vision of the universal relevance of Western experiences. Pye (1963) followed suit, editing an important volume on the role of communication in facilitating political development, while Pool (1973) and his students invested enormous energy in the study of the Communist media systems of China and the Soviet Union. For want of quality empirical studies in the international realm, Wilbur Schramm (1964) started with Lerner's thesis and extrapolated from the Columbia group's hodge-podge findings to offer policy advice to an international audience; his UNESCO-sponsored *Mass Media and National Development* was greeted by many Third World planners as something of a development "bible."

Through the 1960s and 1970s, from Stanford and later the East-West Center, Schramm fostered cross-institutional collaboration between two coasts across the continent, working closely with MIT's Lerner, Pye, and Pool on "development communication" (Pye, 1963; Lerner & Schramm, 1967; Pool & Schramm, 1973; Schramm & Lerner, 1976). As the next generation of scholars began to elaborate on modernization theory, one variant that emerged preeminent was diffusion of innovations. Synthesizing the tradition of news diffusion studies with their origin in New York and that of agricultural diffusion studies from the farm belt of Iowa, Rogers (2003) elevated the diffusion model to international status by transplanting it to various overseas outposts. In the field of international communication, this thesis provoked by far the largest number of empirical studies abroad in replication of its U.S. origins. Looking back, it may be said that modernization theory (especially the versions of Lerner, Schramm, and Rogers) owed its popularity during the heyday of East-West conflict in part to the illusory charm it offered the elite in poor Third World countries—the promise of simplistic solutions to tough problems. In his chapter Jan Servaes, among others, has criticized modernization theory for (a) a lack of empirical support; (b) behavioristic and positivistic biases; (c) conceptual inadequacy; (d) insensitivity to social context; (e) Western centrism; and (f) being ahistorical. All these flaws, so glaringly evident with the benefit of hindsight, went overlooked at the time.

As the East-West conflict mixed uneasily with emerging South-North tensions in the 1970s, Latin Americanists proposed various strains of "dependency" perspectives as a formidable challenge to the modernization formula. In a thoughtful review essay, Palma (1978) summarizes and compares three main perspectives from this movement: (a) the theory of

"development of underdevelopment" (A. G. Frank); (b) "growth without development" (O. Sunkel); and (c) "dependent development" (F. H. Cardoso). With the East-West conflict unabated, the United States continued to spread the gospel of modernization to the Third World as a main strategy to deter Communism. Meanwhile, on the South-North dimension, the United States found itself blamed and held responsible by poor nations for the unequal control and distribution of the world's economic and information resources. The resulting antagonism was in large part what prompted the United States to withdraw from UNESCO in 1984 (an absence lasting until 2003); President Ronald Reagan had no stomach or patience for the heated "new international information and communication order" debate in which the United States was chief villain.

Of the three perspectives, "growth without development" proved of minor importance, but the implications of theoretical and methodological divergences between "development of underdevelopment" and "dependent development" were most profound. Methodologically, Frank as a political economist proposed a formal *theory* of underdevelopment, which was almost a mirror image of modernization theory it sought to debunk. Cardoso, a Weberian historical sociologist who years later became president of Brazil, rejected formalized theory and instead preferred to use dependency as a *methodology* to account historically for the open-ended and concrete situations of underdevelopment—indeed, Cardoso (1977) criticized U.S. scholars for consuming dependency as a formal theory in Frank's positivistic terms.

Frank theorized that Latin America was incorporated into the international capitalist system, in which the world center through *external* conditioning of local economies created entrenched conditions of underdevelopment for the periphery. Rejecting Frank's exclusive attention on external conditions, Cardoso argued that it was important to grasp "the political alliances, the ideologies, and the movement of structures within the dependent countries" and to analyze how these forces "internalized" the external. He concluded that at least some countries (such as Brazil) in the semiperiphery were able to develop their economies concurrent with continued dependence on the international capitalist structure.

The implications surely are worth revisiting in the age of globalization; yet the influence of dependency perspectives on international communication research has been sparse and uneven. Herbert I. Schiller (1976) was perhaps the best-known critic of cultural imperialism to have drawn, albeit rather cursorily, on Frank's theory of underdevelopment as well as

on Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory. Otherwise, the theoretical alliance and intellectual flow between radical U.S./European political economists with their Third World (in this case, Latin American) counterparts remained weak and minimal. Amid the almost total absence of analysis written in English on "dependent development" of media and culture, Salinas and Paldan (1979) provided a notable exception. Even among members of the like-minded critical Marxist camp, First World and Third World scholars were divided by a veritable gulf in interests, concerns, and orientations. The divide had obvious material underpinnings, of course: when radical British scholars were occupied with the erosion of the "public sphere" (including public service broadcasting) caused by Thatcherism, Latin American scholars had to grapple with pressing issues of economic survival and structural dependence. It is rather startling that Raymond Williams's brilliant work on Marxist cultural theory and analysis (Williams, 1977) was oriented primarily toward the history and geography of social formation in Britain without connecting explicitly to the wider historical and international context of imperialism. It took someone like Edward Said (1993) to fill this significant void, paving the foundation for the postcolonial work that should form a point of departure for much of the Third World analysis. Stuart Hall, another main figure of British cultural studies, also waited until rather late in his career to start addressing the identity issues related to the race and ethnicity of his own Jamaican immigrant background (Chen, 1996).

In his chapter for this volume, Tsan-Kuo Chang performs an interesting frequency count of keyword combinations in the title of journal articles over time, providing a rough index of major "paradigms" and paradigm change. Such keywords as "modernization," "imperialism" and "dependency" came into significant use in the 1970s. In the 1980s, two significant clusters appeared: imperialism/dependency and modernization/dependency. What these clusters mean is murky, but an educated guess might point to two camps: while the radical perspective linked imperialism to dependency, the pluralist perspective pitted modernization against dependency. Not until the 1990s did "globalization" come into vogue. By the 1990s, coinciding with the end of the Cold War and the rise of neoliberal ideology and rhetoric of a new world order, "globalization" rapidly rose in prominence, with "dependency" sinking to relative obscurity in academic discourses. Moreover, the close affinity of "globalization" with "modernization" suggests the almost unchecked ascendancy of neoliberalism in the post–Cold War milieu. Peter Dahlgren succinctly notes in his chapter that

the theoretical traditions of globalization (from social sciences) and post-colonialism (from the humanities) have had relatively little encounter with each other, when in fact they should be very much entwined.

In reconstructing the neoliberal world order after the conclusion of the Cold War, Said (1993, p. xvii) remarks that the United States has displayed "its redolent self-congratulation, unconcealed triumphalism, and its grave proclamation of responsibility." Meanwhile, culture, political values and foreign policies have been reframed euphemistically in terms of "soft power" (Nye, 1990, 2004)—that is, ostensibly no longer dependent on the hard power of economic prowess and military might. Celebrants canonize liberalism as having prevailed over other competing systems and ideologies, ushering in a new era euphorically characterized as "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992). At the same time, however, the United States is urged to bolster its "soft power" in order to win the war of public diplomacy (Nye, 2008) and to prevail in the supposed "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1993). It seems that earlier proponents of modernization theory such as Huntington have not really changed their position, despite the veneer of seemingly different sets of rhetoric. Like the modernization project, the current soft power and "civilizing" missions are still geared toward advancing the vital interests of Washington. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as they contrarily sapped vital resources from an ailing economy, have flown in the face of naïve and wishful predictions about the United States reaping a "peace dividend."

Chang's chapter begs a big question: What accounts for the contexts in which such shifts in keyword combinations take place? Chang is no fan of "cultural imperialism" and attributes its long life cycle to "group think." He favors Castell's concepts of "network society" and "network state," but as Benson discusses in his chapter, whether this optimistic version of technological determinism can be taken at face value is an open question. It is about time: vigorous debates on globalization and anti-globalization discourses have occurred in other social science disciplines (Held & McGrew, 2007), but technological dazzle evidently is mesmerizing enough to significantly mute such voices in the field of international communication. After all, "network society" does not take anything away from the realities of global domination.

What counting these terms reminds us is that academic fads come and go, moving in tandem with the reigning political environment. No one is arguing for keeping a vulgar theory of cultural imperialism, but the concept still deserves intellectual currency as long as global domination per-

sists. The chapter by Colin Sparks is a clarion call to resurrect the relevance of cultural imperialism as an explanatory framework. Not that competing discourses will die away; but the field needs juxtaposition, new arguments, and energetic debates. As Alfred Whitehead (1925) once said, "The clash of doctrines is not a disaster, it is an opportunity."

Hegemony

In starting his project on the intellectual history of the twentieth century, Peter Watson (2001) sought input from scholarly specialists on the intellectual thought of the non-Western world. Much to his amazement, almost all of them—experts on the history and cultures of India, China, Japan, South and Central Africa, and the Arab world—concurred that during the century nothing matching the achievements of the Western world had come out of non-Western contexts. Since the nineteenth century, all these old civilizations had fallen short in their varied and rushed attempts to respond to the challenges and ramifications of Western cultural imperialism, leaving a legacy of "cultural shock" that still lingers.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, China declined from what had been a closed yet seemingly self-sufficient and proud empire to semi-colonial status and humiliation at the hands of Western and Japanese colonial powers. Early modernists at the outset of the twentieth century (such as Yan Fu, Zhang Binglin, and Liu Shipei), shocked into searching for Western prescriptions, thought they had found answers in Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, and Herbert Spencer. (It was said that China's intellectual elite revered Western scholars as Gods and their treatises as sacred—an exaggerated portrayal but symbolic of the cultural mind-set of the era.) With China's indigenous identity shattered, these seekers came to accept the claim that all civilizations must obey the "scientific" iron law of social evolutionism, in which only the fittest could survive at each stage along a trajectory of linear development. Liu Shipei (1884–1919), the first to translate the *Communist Manifesto* into Chinese, stands out as a vivid example of this Westernized worldview: he declared that Western countries, already at the "modern" stage, thus enjoyed stability, whereas China was still loitering in the "pre-modern" stage with its precarious cycles of chaos. Chinese intellectuals seeking to reinterpret Chinese canonical texts in light of Western body of knowledge firmly believed that China was lagging behind the West by an entire historical chapter.

With several notable exceptions, the next generation of modernists—

many of whom had been educated in the West—took an equally if not more radical approach toward their traditional Chinese heritage. The intellectual cohort of the 1920s acquired a more intimate and nuanced understanding of the West and shifted the targets of admiration to such contemporary figures as John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and Harold Laski, along with the late Karl Marx, whose translated texts were beginning to circulate in China. The emblematic figure of anti-traditional enlightenment, Lu Xun, advised young people to read nothing but Western books, holding that Chinese books were so out of touch with reality as to be incapacitating. The liberal intellectual Hu Shi was equally anti-traditional, but returning from the United States armed with Dewey's "scientific method," he energized a short-lived but vigorous revolution in the study of Chinese classics. Many others who had internalized the ethos, paradigms, and exemplars of Western scholarship likewise reoriented their studies of China's history, geography, literature, and society with remarkable accomplishments. In this period, intellectuals who firmly rooted their interests in the fertile ground of indigenous texts and experiences but systematically dissected their subjects with the theoretical and methodological advances adapted from the West went a long way toward integrating and enriching both cultural traditions. It is not surprising that many "masterpieces" produced during that transitory golden age (1920s–1940s) are being reissued with a vengeance, to widespread accolades from today's Chinese academic community.

The contours of this brief intellectual history (see Yu, 2007, pp. 272–91) have notable implications. First, China's loss of self-confidence in the face of Western cultural assaults has been keenly felt, but is by no means unique or exceptional. Otherwise, Watson (2001) would have gladly given a pride of place to what were generally regarded as seminal intellectual contributions from Indian, Japanese, Islamic or African (i.e., except Chinese) civilizations. Western hegemony is undeniably a universal fact. Second, Western cultural supremacy has permeated every field of modern scholarship, with the active collaboration of local elites in Third World countries. Although this influence may provoke little epistemological concern in the natural sciences, it is obvious cause for consternation in the humanities and social sciences, where cultural premises and values are deemed of cardinal import. For a young and immature field of study called international communication, what this means is that scholars everywhere must learn *from* the West, then unlearn, and proceed to relearn *with* the West. Most vital of all, we must seek feasible ways to cross cultural borders and achieve

truly multicultural interaction. We need to develop agendas for expanded South-North and South-South dialogue with such aims in mind.

At the same time, scholars hoping to make these breakthroughs are still encumbered with social Darwinist postulates about the required "stages" through which each civilization must pass. This perspective finds its latter-day incarnations in modernization theory and also in Marxist doctrine—both carriers of old ideas in different guises. According to modernization theory, the media played a critical role in stimulating empathy to facilitate the passing of "traditional" society through the "transitional" phase to attain the "modern" threshold (Lerner, 1958). Marxist dogma about "stages" of history has not plagued our field simply because Western Marxists are not particularly interested in media, but it certainly frustrated several generations of Chinese academics in other fields; into the 1970s, historians strapped into ideological straitjackets still were trying futilely to determine when feudal and capitalist "stages" had begun and ended so as to substantiate the official claim that new China had surpassed all other earlier stages to enter the more advanced stage of socialism. Even worse than the impediments to understanding, of course, was the great damage to lives and careers wreaked by this academic charade.

Finding a New Point of Departure

Modernization theory is a prime example of the theoretical and methodological failings of trying to mimic the natural sciences in the social sciences. Now discredited but not abandoned, the assumptions of modernization theory are still widespread in academic literature; Inglehart and his associates (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Norris and Inglehart, 2009), for example, represent major recent attempts at reviving modernization theory in "globalized" terms. The quest to establish universally valid "laws" of human society with little regard for cultural values and variations thankfully, however, seems to be running out of steam. The development of micro-history, the interest in "local knowledge" among anthropologists (following Geertz, 1983), and the challenges of epistemological reflexivity posed by continental European thought (such as phenomenology and hermeneutics) are all ways of reckoning, if belatedly, with the important dimensions of empathetic understanding and subjective consciousness in the study of humanity. By now it seems obvious that no culture or theory is one size that fits all. At the same time, the "local" cannot be parochial; rather, it is dialectically interactive with the "global." The recognition that few places

are culturally homogeneous anymore and that everyone must contend with the emerging motifs of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural complexities has reached to the very heights of Western academia itself. In a matter of decades, for instance, the movement to incorporate non-Western and non-white authors into the U.S. university canon has been spearheaded by Stanford University and the Ivy League.

In this volume, concern with the local and global and their interrelationship extends beyond geography to theory, method, and epistemology. Contributors are seeking new approaches to "cosmopolitan theories"—by which we mean a constellation or system of interlinking concepts that, through continuous cycles of creative synthesis from global perspectives, is provisionally accepted as having robust explanatory power. Such theories are neither fixed nor a priori Western; rather, they are open to constant contestation and dynamic change. Scholars of international communication need the cultural confidence and epistemological autonomy to make their mark on global or cosmopolitan theory, which necessarily will entail borrowing, recasting, or reconceptualizing Western theories—the more the better, whatever help us elucidate and analyze rich local experiences and connect them to broader processes, whatever broaden our horizons and expand our repertoire, as long as we are not beholden to any purported final arbiter of universal truth. And in the event no suitable theories are available, we are obliged or challenged to create new ones.

As I point out later in this volume, connecting the local with the global does not give us license to abuse local experiences to *fit* or validate global theories; instead, we should use "global" theories to help *illuminate* local experiences. My chapter argues for adopting an approach that commences with reflecting on the internal logic and context of local experiences, gradually moving up the ladder of abstraction, and meeting dynamically with what are considered suitable theories in the larger globalized contexts. Thus, local experiences eventually may be endowed with broader and general significance.

Other contributors complement this project by combining thoughtful conceptual work with keen attention to specifics. As Luckmann (1978) argues, the logic of science *is* the logic of social science, but the explanatory aims are different: the structure of everyday life and the meanings of human action have to be interpreted reflexively and intersubjectively. It is also important to pay attention to different textures of the agency-structure interaction in different contexts: for example, when Western scholars seek to debunk the ideology of news professionalism as upholding the status

quo, this ideology may empower individual journalists in China and other authoritarian countries to make a difference (Lee, 2001).

In this spirit, drawing on empirical evidence from recent Chinese media studies, Judy Polumbaum tries in her chapter to borrow Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration as a starting point for conducting grounded research on the interaction between human agency and social structure. Moreover, she promotes Pierre Bourdieu's "field" of production as a framework to look at how external forces may contribute to expanding or circumscribing the elastic range of possibilities, or how actors may fortify established interests, promote emerging social formation, or yield new creativities. For her, the primary goal of research is to gain rich insights into how the world really works rather than to test propositions in a positivistic manner of causal attribution.

Silvio Waisbord begins by criticizing "area studies" for failing to contribute to a common set of questions and unifying theories in international communication. Let it be recalled that in the immediate wake of the Cold War, the idea of terminating area studies and absorbing them into mainstream disciplines of the humanities and social sciences gained some currency; but alarm over the U.S. shortage of area specialists on al Qaeda and Afghanistan during the "war on terror" gave area studies new academic and institutional life. To me, it might make more sense to promote "*area-based* studies" that combine culturally contextualized area knowledge with theoretically informed pursuits. Waisbord advocates "cosmopolitan scholarship" characterized by "sensitivity to comparative and global questions and approaches and engagement in globalized debates." To this end, he recommends three strategies: (a) analyzing neglected areas in order to rethink arguments and broaden analytical horizons; (b) conducting comparative research so as to provide more solid and nuanced theoretical conclusions; and (c) examining transborder flows and global questions. For each of the three strategies he also cites thought-provoking research topics.

Peter Dahlgren proposes a broadened normative theory of "civic cosmopolitanism" to advance globalized democratic politics and to anchor the analysis of international communication. Dahlgren argues that cosmopolitanism is a necessary element for civic agency in the modern globalized world, and the character of the media is a precondition for such agency because without the media the ideal of democracy would not have been spread so far and so deep. He urges moving the cosmopolitan moral stance into concrete political praxis, for cosmopolitan citizenship has a responsibility to engage with global others. While acknowledging a universalistic

core in globalized democratic politics, we should be sensitive to different modes of democratic praxis due to contingencies of circumstance. Dahlgren concludes: "Democratic civic agency needs to incorporate the cosmopolitan perspective and pay more attention to morality as an analytic dimension for understanding political agency as an expression of subjectivity. Cosmopolitanism needs to analytically further engage with the media, and look beyond moral categories to situated political practices." How to translate this reflective piece of normative theory into empirical projects of sorts will be a big challenge.

Rodney Benson offers a critical comparative analysis of three European-influenced master terms—public sphere (Jürgen Habermas), field (Bourdieu), and network (Manuel Castells, Bruno Latour)—and their implications for research in transnational or non-Western contexts. Given his complex arguments, I can only highlight three salient points here. First, as Benson argues, "As one moves from Habermas/Peters and Bourdieu on the one hand to Castells and especially Latour on the other hand the ontological accounts become more fluid, the epistemological accounts (to the extent they are elaborated) become more relativist, and the politics become more open-ended." Second, the public sphere project is most useful for internet democracy and in need of critical interrogation, but it draws a line in the sand against authoritarian projects. Field theory holds some promise for investigating the processes of identity formation, the unequal distribution of resources, and the importance of symbolic and economic power. Castells retains an interest in power and democratic politics but his theory is too flexible and ahistorical, whereas Latour's micro-empirical approach refuses the big picture. Third, it would nonetheless be fruitful to draw upon and engage with any or all of these theories, but with reflexivity, to facilitate empirical research for international communication.

Writing from the perspective of cross-cultural and comparative literary studies, Zhang Longxi eloquently argues that the "translation" of meanings within or between languages and cultures is a communicative act of border-crossing, a goal to which all cosmopolitan scholars have a moral responsibility, despite difficulties, to make a contribution. The cosmopolitan spirit assumes that "different peoples at great distances from one another with very different cultures and histories can understand each other and be brought together to form a common humanity." He draws on the most fascinating historical episodes of utopian and demonized representations of China in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the Jesuits (who saw China as the "European vision of Cathay" and Confucius

as the "patron saint" of the Enlightenment) versus the Catholic Church (which fanned the "Chinese rites controversy"), to illustrate some of the issues confronting East-West understanding. At the end of the day, he rejects as contradicting historical facts and textual evidence any formulations of dichotomized, essentialized, and opposite "modes of thinking" that are alleged to cause the incommensurability of cultural values and ideas between East and West.

For decades, the standard frame of reference for comparing media systems has been *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). Despite its vast and long-standing influence, this framework has been criticized for its Cold War bias, Western centrism, and conceptual flaws (Nerone, 1995; see also Servaes's chapter in this volume). Almost fifty years later came the more thoughtful work of Hallin and Mancini (2004), who compared four dimensions of media systems—the structure of media markets, professionalism, political parallelism, and the role of the state—across 18 advanced democracies in western Europe and North America. They derived three Western models: (a) the north Atlantic or liberal model; (b) the northern European or democratic corporatist model; and (c) the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model. Hallin and Mancini (2012) further assembled a group of scholars from the non-Western world (China, Brazil, Russia, Poland, and South Africa), whose case studies were intended to subject the original framework to critical scrutiny. The ongoing dialogue between the "most similar systems" of the Western world and the "most dissimilar systems" of the non-Western world is a fruitful experiment for conceptual improvement and theory building. As part of this extended discussion, Paulo Mancini maintains in his chapter that the polarized pluralist and especially hybridized models are more applicable to non-Western countries, where mass parties are not everyday experience and the media are instruments of state intervention and elite maneuvering. Besides questioning the Western/non-Western dichotomy, it is always vital to ask what variables, dimensions, or indicators are valid for comparative research. If imposing such a concept and yardstick as "media professionalism" on the non-Western world is seen as unacceptable (as some may argue), what would be a valid alternative?

Michael Curtin observes in his chapter that there is no need to "internationalize" film studies because it has from the beginning been "international," with its origin in the likes of Harold Innis. This is at best an exception to the general pattern of intellectual parochialism and Western dominance; Innis and other globalists are rarely in the bibliography for stu-

dents of journalism and mass communication in the United States. Curtin proposes the concept of "media capitals," which tend to be located in major port cities with dense transnational networks of hybridized culture and cultural interaction, creative migration, and concentrated capital resources for production and distribution. He argues that the nation's political capitals, because of the entrenched institutions of censorship and clientelism, rarely emerge as media capitals—with the intriguing theoretical implication that political centrality means media/culture marginality. It should be noted that the historical antecedents of the empire and the legacy of post-colonial conditions may be instrumental in the shaping of "media capitals." Moreover, these media capitals do not challenge the dominance of Hollywood; Hong Kong and Mumbai have become major film hubs, but few of their films make an impact beyond neighboring countries.

Arvind Rajapopal uses South Asia as a site of communicative modernity to offer a densely interpretive chapter on post-colonial visual culture. His central argument is that "[g]reater visibility in public does not ensure more rationality, nor does a greater density of information flow assure less violence or more democratization." New media reactivate rather than supplant or erase earlier media forms, and media expansion makes social divisions more visible instead of promoting unity. Non-Western forms of "seeing" tend to validate, not disrupt, the existing rules of social space. Post-colonial visual culture extends a "split public" between religion and politics, without rendering either of them transparent to the other. While media spectacles are an extension of commodity logic in the West, they are only a site of heterogeneous factors brought together to enhance the marketability of the commodity in the post-colonial South Asia.

Revisiting "Cultural Imperialism"

Finally, I would like to revisit the enduring theme of culture/media imperialism, by way of the provocative chapter by Colin Sparks, because this topic invokes a host of interesting theoretical, ideological, and methodological debates. Sparks does not like such terms as cultural imperialism or media imperialism, but argues that we should understand international communication as being shaped by the *cultural* consequences of imperialism. He is explicitly critical of capitalism as a force or source of imperialism. As a pronounced feature of the contemporary world system, he notes that states in the advanced countries tend to colonize international communication through direct or indirect uses of the media.

To me, Sparks's argument speaks in important ways to the core issues of how we can assure this analysis is holistic on the one hand but not totalistic on the other. A holistic perspective does not reduce the whole to distinct parts; the whole is larger than the sum of parts, but this does not preclude or exclude a detailed analysis of the constituent formation. In other words, we cannot be content with viewing just the wood to the neglect of the trees, or vice versa; for aesthetic and ethical reasons we need a balanced landscape of the two elements to round up a fuller picture. Schiller (1976), for example, attacked an assortment of tourism, advertising, public relations, entertainment, news media, and education in the United States as a neat package of "cultural imperialism." It is laudable not to compartmentalize "cultural imperialism," but this "abstract" and essentialized formulation may risk moving dangerously close to being a totalistic discourse. As such, it may scorn any analyses of nuanced differences and the interaction between cultural genres, and looks unfavorably to anything short of utopian once-and-for-all solutions, such as waging a partial yet crucial resistance movement of cultural intifada and guerrilla wars. Frank (1969) warned that Latin America had no choice other than "underdevelopment" or "revolution." Likewise, Schiller (1976) urged Third World countries to extricate themselves from the international capitalist system as a precondition for purging cultural imperialism. The prospect of mass extrication is, realistically speaking, so slim as to render any impatient and totalistic project most likely a recipe for inaction. Equally important is the question of where Third World countries should extricate themselves to? The sad fact is that extrication does not promise cultural independence—and independence is not synonymous with liberation—as it is clear that before our eyes are so many post-imperialist Third World countries run by nationalist, chauvinistic, sectarian, or brutal regimes with the whole pathology of dictatorial power. I recall these seemingly ancient examples primarily in view of their contemporary resonances. Even more important, how are we to understand and sort out the complex, highly contested, and often contradictory meanings of "cultural consequences" in the way of multilayered structures, relationships, and interactions between media genres, content flow, transfer of institution and technology, ideological effect, and the all-encompassing "way of life"? It should also be kept in mind that no modern culture is self-sufficient, fully autonomous, or out of touch with others, as Said (1993) and Hall (1996) have emphasized the open, hybridized, and mutually interactive characters of modern culture.

Imperialism with or without Final Guarantees?

Sparks argues that "[s]hifts in economic power are usually accompanied by a shift in military power and a shift in cultural power." This implies that the economic power of capitalism may precede and create certain cultural consequences of imperialism. Three points can be briefly noted. First, if Michael Curtin is right in arguing that "media capitals" tend to be far away from the nation's political centers and concentrated in rowdy port cities that are disdained by national elites, then the link between economic forces and political forces seems significantly weakened. We are at least reminded of these competing and yet inconclusive hypotheses. Second, is economic power necessarily a "determining" locomotive of cultural power? The fact that Japan's unparalleled international economic power in the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by its relatively weak presence of international cultural power, plus as-yet dubious evidence on the emerging cases of China, India, and Russia, makes me wonder if a nation's ability to transform its economic power into cultural power is necessarily assured. Third, most seriously, if we opt not to quarrel with Sparks's claim, the task remains one of fully conceptualizing where the analysis of capitalism's imperialist cultural consequences should begin or end.

The intramural dispute between radical political economists and culturalists seems to throw important light on this last question. Murdock and Golding (1977, p. 17) started by taking Theodor Adorno, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall to task for doing "a top-heavy analysis in which an elaborate autonomy of cultural forms balances insecurely on a schematic account of economic forces shaping their production." Golding and Murdock (1991, p. 27) reiterated the central importance that should be accorded to explaining "how the economic dynamics of production structure public discourse by promoting certain cultural forms over others." Their criticism has to be interpreted against Williams's seminal work (1977) on Marxist cultural theory, which redefines the concept of "determination" not in terms of "reflection" but in terms of "mediation." Williams further develops the concept of "mediation" to mean that the economic base may primarily "set the limits" (passively) and "exert pressures" (actively) on the ideological field. By the same token, Stuart Hall (1996) thinks of the "materialism" of Marxist theory in terms of "determination (of the cultural) by the economic in the *first* instance." He criticizes political economists' steadfast position with respect to "determination (of the cultural) by the

economic in the *last* instance" has long been "in the depository of the last dream or illusion of theoretical *certainty*" (italics in original).

Hall (1996) characterizes his theoretical stance metaphorically as "Marxism *without* final guarantees." The material base is a point of departure for establishing "the open horizon of Marxist theorizing" (in Hall's terms), for defining the direction and setting the limits of cultural production. However, the actual processes and outcomes of cultural formation and counterformation are more open-ended, more autonomous, and more intensely contested than what political economists would postulate—in fact, as Hall maintains, the outcomes are "without guaranteed closures," to the extent that the cultural may in some cases even depart from the contours of the economic. Insofar as Sparks (1996, p. 95) was critical of Hall for not investigating the material base of Thatcherism, we may reasonably understand him to be a defender of the "cultural imperialism *with* final guarantees" position, as determined by the logic of capitalism. With or without final guarantees, it is essential to specify and analyze a complex chain of conceptual building blocks that straps global capitalism to the posited cultural consequences of imperialism. To this end, how profitable is it to draw on a rejuvenated version of, say, the historically interpretive framework of "dependent development" that focuses on the dialectical interactions among the "triple alliance" of the state, the dominant classes, and the international capitalist structure (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Evans, 1979)? In the age of globalization, furthermore, how can cultural consequences react upon the material base?

Political Economy versus Audience Decoding

Cultural imperialism would seem to have enduring relevance as long as media globalization radiates from metropolitan centers—and indeed, from one primary center. Despite the rise of regional hubs of cultural production, media globalization still is hard to distinguish from Americanization. The United States is the only genuine global media exporter across a range of media, and home to media conglomerates that are both vertically and horizontally integrated to span the entire spectrum of forms and genres. These conglomerates, built on the elusive benefits of synergy and the ephemeral icon of consumer choice, are either U.S.-owned outright (Disney, Time Warner, and Viacom) or nominally "foreign" (Sony, Bertelsmann, Vivendi-Universal, and News Corporation) but with their most important operations and markets in the United States. These companies

compete and cooperate in an intertwined way: they set up cross owner-ship, produce revenue sharing and joint ventures, engage in coproduction and co-purchasing, and swap local outlets (Tunstall & Machin, 1999, pp. 64–66). Entertainment is the priority; meanwhile, many scholars have expressed concern that journalism may be increasingly McDonaldized and trivialized, overwhelmed by the emphasis on infotainment, gossip, and scandal that pander to the instant gratification of mass consumers (e.g., Gunther & Mughan, 2000).

None of the global conglomerates has been able to make the inroads it would desire in the China market. But all are trying, as international appetites for American-style cultural products become ever more vital to corporate survival. In this volume, Jaap van Ginnenken presents a fascinating case of a globalized media product—*Avatar*, the first 3-D mega-blockbuster—to illustrate how tried-and-tested Hollywood formulas have re-emerged in new technological guise. He points out five well-worn colonial motifs that endure despite all the technological dazzle, namely: (a) underdeveloped "virgin" land; (b) primitive national tribe; (c) indigenous natural worldviews; (d) imperial intervention; and (5) the beautiful native girl. It is tempting to interpret the *Avatar* phenomenon as the center of world capitalism imposing its particular system of manufactured cultural images, forms, and meanings on the world audience.

However, as Liebes and Katz (1993) have demonstrated, audiences negotiate with the media over meanings in accordance with their own cultural assumptions. Van Ginnenken likewise highlights the contradiction between the control exercised over production and the "relative autonomy" of meaning-making in reception. In short, focusing primarily on the political economy of media ownership and control without sufficient sensitivity to the process of audience decoding may result in overestimating the weight of cultural domination and homogenization. On the other hand, paying sole attention to audience decoding without situating it in the structural constraints of product availability as dictated by the logic of contemporary political economy may lead to minimizing the weight of cultural domination. Once again, we face questions of agency-structure interaction. Once again, more empirical investigation is required.

Concluding Remarks

I begin this chapter by criticizing the parochial orientation of U.S. scholarship that has distorted the study of international communication for de-

cades, and the willing collaboration between the tutor and the tutored that has supported such academic hegemony. Besides critiquing established approaches to studying media and communications outside Anglo-American contexts, contributors to this volume have offered a way forward for studying the issue of media and globalization.

We take seriously the continued relevance of nation-states while remaining attuned to the ways in which media and communications is now a thoroughly "globalized" space. We have examined different dimensions of the world-historical nature of media and communications: institutions and power, states and governance, policy and regulation; economic capital, political economy, and production of journalism, media, network, and culture industry; cultural geography, meaning, and public sphere; issues of identity, values and cosmopolitanism; and visual culture. Furthermore, we have situated these issues of pertinence to international communication scholars in relation to questions of relevance to the field of media and communications at large.

To suggest alternatives aimed at truly "internationalizing" international communication, we believe that the point of departure must be precisely the opposite of parochialism—-namely, a spirit *of cosmopolitanism*. In sum, we reject both America-writ-large views of the world and self-defeating mirror images that reject anything American or Western on the grounds of cultural incompatibility or even cultural superiority. Scholars worldwide have a moral responsibility to foster global visions and mutual understanding, which requires that we listen to one another patiently, try to put ourselves in the shoes of others, and stand prepared to negotiate and contest painstakingly over language, meanings, evidence, and states of mind. Metaphorically, this forms symphonic harmony that is nonetheless made of cacophonic sounds. In this light, I might be forgiven for making a bolder claim that our ultimate goal is not only to internationalize "international communication" as a subfield, but rather that international communication will provide a vital force, site, and opportunity to revitalize the whole agenda and landscape of media and communication studies. This claim resonates with the classical spirit of "sociological imagination" (Mills, 1959) that calls for examining media and communication issues from global and historical perspectives.

Should this volume give rise to the unfortunate yet inevitable impression of overemphasizing the conceptual and methodological flaws of U.S. scholarship, it is because only through critical reflection will any new beginnings have a chance. My utmost admiration, nevertheless, goes to Said

(1993), who framed his criticism of the culture of imperialism—along with Third World resistance against the empire—in terms of the grand narratives of enlightenment and emancipation. He did not countenance reaction driven by xenophobia or cultural nationalism. I recall as well the philosopher who once described the meaning of philosophy to me as "having no knockout statements so the conversation can go on." This is a good maxim for the enterprise we hope to foster—an ongoing dialogue in the cosmopolitan spirit that tries to traverse borders, identify shared values, and reach common ground while respecting differences.

This book grows out of an international conference organized jointly by the Department of Media and Communication and the Center for Communication Research at the City University of Hong Kong. Professor Elihu Katz, as a living testimony of the development of both U.S. and international communication research for more than half a century, was invited to deliver the conference's keynote address under the university's Distinguished Lecture program. Let the truth be told about the story of this remarkable career and life in his own words and in his own chapter by someone who has inspired us all.

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NOTE

1. I owe a debt to Professor Judy Polumbaum for helping me to make this chapter more lucid and readable.