UNIT -3: GLOBAL NETWORKS OF TELEVISION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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3. 1. Learning Objectives:

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- explain the development of technology and television networks vis-à-vis industry
- describe the idea about the global media flow
- discuss the global media and communications system
- identify the cross border television networks of Asia

3.2 Introduction:

It is often said that television has altered our world. In the same way, people often speak of a new world, a new society, a new phase of history, being created by new technology. For decades, television scholars have viewed global television through the lens of cultural imperialism, focusing primarily on programs produced by US and UK markets and exported to foreign markets. It is important for us to re-examine dominant approaches and their legacies of global/local and center/ periphery, and offers new directions for understanding television's contemporary incarnations. Despite television's global reach, the radical transformations of its associated technologies and industries, and the variety in programming

and audiences, mainstream television studies holds fast to its origins both of medium and discipline. Transnational television has not simply adapted to globalization but helps to fashion the new global order. Television may once have been defined by an oligopoly of broadcast channels, frequently as few as one or two in any centre of population. More and more, though, it seems likely to be defined by licensed or free-to-air providers together with others as the system becomes more differentiated. The new institutional players come from within and without the sector. Thus, for example, in different European markets, there has been a significant increase in the number of television broadcasting networks on the air, public service and, especially, commercial. Meanwhile the past twenty years have also seen the onset of satellite, cable and pay TV services. New players have entered the distribution arena including companies based in the telecommunications and computer sector and newspapers. Meanwhile, new trade agreements seem likely to encourage other groups, both local and international, to enter the television arena.

Is global television synonymous with a television globalization or a globalized television industry? Is it better addressed using a more neutral term such as 'transborder television'? Are we in an era of post-broadcasting television? How does present-day international television fit into this domain?

Chalaby (2005) has identified four of the five levels recognized here. He calls the last, mega level of television 'global television'. Jean K. Chalaby is a sociologist who specializes in global media, transnational television, comparative media studies, and media history. However, it is worth recalling that an older term, 'world television', is also an appropriate label for such a configuration. Television at this level has certainly grown over the past 80 years. Skeletally present before and after World War II, when audio-visual broadcasting was being inaugurated amongst the wealthiest, most advanced nations of the West, global television or world television is now an increasingly visible and powerful component of the total accumulated system of television across the planet. Equally, though, one should always bear in mind that this growth occurs alongside changes in the visibility and power of the other levels of television. The planet's television is also marked by

different spatial arrangements, as is the case with those systems existing at the other levels. Chalaby (2005) identifies four interconnected components of this planetary television system that are complexly integrated and changing. First, there is the media industry component, itself composed by seven giant transnational corporations supplemented by other multinational organizations with strong regional sales or those with global reach specializing in niche markets. Clearly, a body such as BBC Worldwide is such a player, even if it belongs to a second tier rather than to the first. Second, there is a technological infrastructure in the shape of worldwide communication networks that include cable, satellite and the internet; this infrastructure facilitates and maintains the operation of these organizations. Additionally, there is the news and entertainment content and associated data and services that circulate through the system. Finally, there is the global regulatory regime that includes various international bodies, technical and trade agreements, and legal decisions and ordinances.

3.3 French-British Television Exchange:

Many English-speaking residents are interested in watching UK television in France to keep up with their favourite programmes and films, and get the news in their own. In 1950 and 1952, the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) and Radio Télévision Française (RTF) realized the first transnational television transmissions ever. The so called 'Calais Experiment' (1950) and the 'Paris Week' (1952) were celebrated as historic landmarks in European television and celebrated as a new 'entente cordiale' between the two countries. What is generally praised as the first instance of transnational television and an historic landmark in European television history, the Franco-British 'Calais experiment' of August 1950 and the 'Paris week' of July 1952 is in fact a perfect showcase to demonstrate both the ambitions and the challenges of institutionalising the new medium of television as a 'champion national' both in Britain and in France.

On both sides of the Channel, the collaboration between the two national public broadcasting organisations BBC and RTF was celebrated as an important Franco-British partnership in a technology full of symbolic

inscriptions. In addition, the successful trans-Channel transmissions of 1950 and 1952 paved the way for the first experiments in European television relays during the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953 that eventually led to the emergence of institutionalised structures of television programme exchanges and live broadcasts within the European Broadcasting Union and the birth of Eurovision in 1954. The Franco-British tandem quite naturally became a leading actor in the development of this new European infrastructure and figures such as the French director of programmes at RTF, Jean d'Arcy, developed into a transnational agent for the promotion and realisation of television across Europe.

Yet on the other side, the rhetorical reference to the 'entente cordiale' between the two nations which had a long record of historic enmity masked a fierce techno-political conflict that characterised the post-war European television landscape: a conflict about the technical standards of black and white television in Europe and, most importantly, about the line standard that, at least to a large degree, defined the resolution and picture quality of the television image. While the British reopened their television services after the war using their pre-war 405v line standard, the French adopted a so-called high-definition standard of 819 lines by political decree in 1948. From a technical point of view, both the Calais Experiment and the Paris Week were therefore dependent on the development of a technical interface, a so-called line converter, operating as a gateway between the two standards. Whereas the rather hand-made solution to this problem by the technicians and engineers of the BBC and RTF fulfilled its goal during the 1950 and 1952 experiments, both parties actively promoted their standards as European models on the international scene, trying to convince emerging television nations in Europe of their technical superiority. Both the British and the French pursued a protectionist industrial strategy, trying to secure the best possible starting position for their domestic radio industry in the booming television business.

The 'Calais Experiment and 'Paris Week' demonstrated the feasibility of a bilateral television programme and thereby backed Bezençon's plans of a regular television programme exchange organised by the EBU

(European Broadcasting Union). Swiss Marcel Bezencon was the father of the idea of a systematic television programme exchange in Europe. But the vision of 'Eurovision' needed another impulse to break through. This impulse was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. in June 1953. For the first time in television history an event was broadcast live into five countries: Great Britain, France, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. From a cultural history perspective, the effect of this transmission on the public cannot be overestimated. The feeling of a televisual be-part-of created by the live transmission of motion pictures undoubtedly encouraged television development all over the world.

3.4 Eurovision :

The invention of transnational programmes under the label of 'Eurovision' brought the nations of Europe together, but to fight musical (Song Contest) or physical (Jeux Sans Frontie`res) battles. Television history needs to take account of these phenomena if it is to understand the transnational nature of television as a medium. The Eurovision network, to which EBU members could submit and extract programming, was not only transnational in nature, but also encouraged the use of foreign programming within national schedules. Yet, this did not challenge the national specificity of television, as the primary use of Eurovision was for the exchange of news and sports footage which could be re-edited and narrated to fit the cultural demands of different national television services. While Eurovision was based on a mutually supportive non-profit-making model, the EBU Screening Sessions were set up as a centralized European market for the trade of television programmes. With the increase in television hours across Europe over the 1960s and 1970s, the EBU Screening Sessions enabled broadcasters to fill their schedules with eimported programming that was often cheaper than original programme production.

Eurovision, a television network that is part of the European Broadcasting Union was founded in the year 1954 in Geneva, Switzerland. It was set up for the purpose of exchanging TV programmes and, subsequently, TV news footage (via the daily Eurovision news exchange -

EVN). The first official Eurovision transmission took place on 6 June, 1954. The first Eurovision transmission included live coverage of the Montreaux Narcissus Festival in Switzerland. The transmission of the event was relayed simultaneously in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The Coronation of Elisabeth II was the first event to be broadcast live internationally. People crowded in front of the few available television sets to see the magic happen. The first Eurovision Song Contest took place in Lugano, Switzerland. Seven countries participated in this historic event and a total of 10 national broadcasters transmitted the show live to audiences at home. Few people know that the contest was designed to show off the Eurovision Network. The 30th edition of the Eurovision Song Contest took place in Gothenburg, Sweden and was the first time that the event was broadcast via satellite over the Eurovision Global Network. The Norwegian duo the Bobbysocks! were the winners with 'La det swinge'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 : When was Eurovision founded? Why was it set up?

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Q.2 : Where did the first Eurovision Song Contest take place?

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3.5 Asian Cross-border Networks:

The word 'Cross-border news' means news that people consume (e.g. watch or read) on a monthly basis that is produced outside of the country in which they currently live. News consumption patterns have

changed rapidly over the last 10 years, with a particular impact on cross border news. 10 years ago, the cost of distribution presented a high barrier to entry, limiting providers to well established, predominantly western, providers such as BBC, CNN and Financial Times. But in the past decade reduced distribution costs (driven by technology) have facilitated supply, while increased international curiosity and mobility has fuelled a surge in demand. The result has been both growing audiences for traditional cross border news organisations and successful entrances by new providers.

Over the past couple of decades, cross-border television channels have been developing across the world. In South Asia, networks like Star TV and Zee TV have successfully challenged state broadcasters and opened up the television market. In the Middle East, satellite channels such as MBC have raised the standards of news reporting and the independent voice of Al-Jazeera has unsettled governments in the region. In North America and Europe, CNN, for example, has transformed international news reporting and the flow of global news. Transborder television channels have had different impacts in various media markets but they raise important issues regarding globalization wherever they develop. They present a form of television that is deterritorialized in character and which is different from that of national channels. Their cross-border coverage, multinational audience and international production operations tear apart the relationship between place and television and challenge the traditional relationship between broadcasting and the nation-state.

Transnational television has not simply adapted to globalization but helps to fashion the new global order. Cross-border channels help sustain the globalizing processes shaping areas as diverse as culture, finance and politics. They add to the flow of information, providing networks of communication and systems of exchange that drive the integration of these fields on a world scale.

Transborder television networks have a relationship to time and place that is entirely different from that of terrestrial television channels. Traditionally, television has been circumscribed to a national territory. In the case of public service broadcasters, as William Melody notes, their financing

'is integrally tied to the domestic audience'. Transnational television networks challenge the enduring relationship between television and the nation state by reaching audiences across frontiers. In terms of reach, three main types of coverage can be distinguished: multi-territory, pan-regional and global. Multi-territory channels broadcast in a selection of territories, typically between two and six. Broadcasters follow this approach because they do not have the resources to deploy a pan-regional distribution or fear that their channel does not have the brand and material to sustain a wider coverage.

Towards the turn of the twentieth century the media and communications industry in Asia underwent quite a radical transformation. The advent of transnational television at the start of the twentieth centurys last decade took Asian governments, broadcasters, advertisers and consumers alike by surprise. Dating from CNN broadcasts of the first Gulf crisis of 199091, this borderless medium captured the imagination of audiences in many countries who had been long accustomed to unimaginative public broadcasting and commercial broadcasting under government control. The transnational medium soon fostered dramatic growth in the sales of satellite dishes and the establishment of cable networks, illegal and quasi-legal, in many Asian countries. Concurrently, there was the growth of the internet and wireless telephony which rode in on the burgeoning commercial communications infrastructure in Asia, making the continent a key regional market. Hence, new borderless media in Asia, including transnational television via satellite and cable, have been added to the on-going debate among its intelligentsia about the controversial consequences of globalisation.

Global media and communications have been revolutionised in recent decades through new electronic technologies such as geostationary satellites, optical fibre, digital transmission, cable television, mobile telephony, computer networks, online libraries and databanks, facsimiles and electronic mail and much more. Increasingly, business investments and government regulations concerning such media hardware and software are being made with the wider global context, and not just domestic

imperatives, in mind. Advocates of these new technologies claim the ensuing unbridled access to information will lead to greater democratisation of societies and opportunities for economic growth to match those in the developed world. Sceptics point out that such technologies tend instead to reinforce the status quo of dependency of developing nations on developed nations, or even perpetuate the inequity within developing nations between their own capitalist elite and working classes.

With almost 500 million television households as of the start of the twenty-first century, Asia has the highest television penetration worldwide; this is expected to rise further to 700 million within a decade.

Transnational television took Asia by storm in the early 1990s, thrilling select audiences across the region, threatening domestic media and perplexing national governments. The true pioneer of this phenomenon was Star TV, which began its broadcasts in late 1991 and catered initially to a pan-Asian audience within its satellite footprint. While CNN preceded Star TV by many months, the former was then simply a relay of its global and largely US-centric programming. In the immediate years that followed, a number of other transnational broadcasters boosted this new industry in Asia, using either some channels created within the region or others that had already been operating globally. On the other hand, there were national broadcasters in the region that had long utilised satellites for domestic transmission, both prior to and after the advent of transnational satellites. Although they were largely available by virtue of signal spillover within their regions, some of these commercial and public broadcasters subsequently, and more so consequently, sought transnational audiences deliberately. Together, these global/regional broadcasters and their national/ domestic counterparts transformed the television industry within Asia by capitalising on satellite, cable and later digital technologies.

Ever since AsiaSat1 helped StarTV pioneer transnational television broadcasting in Asia, several other satellites have entered the region with ambitions to tap into this fast-growing market. With the growing convergence of media and communications technologies, many satellites launched over the 1990s have been multi-purpose. There are now numerous satellites

operating in the region which provide also telephony, data communications, navigation, geographic survey, meteorological studies and other such services. The Asian economic crisis in 1997 was seen as merely a temporary setback for the satellite industry with full recovery predicted for the early 2000s. Still there were over 90 geostationary satellites serving the Asia-Pacific region, located between 30 degrees East and 186 degrees East longitude.

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- CNN : Claiming then to be the only truly global network with transmissions available in 212 countries and territories worldwide via 12 satellites, CNN reached 150 million households, not counting offices and hotel rooms, by the late 1990s. By the time CNN entered the Asian market in 1991, much of its international news was being produced in London and Hong Kong, but it was still perceived as having an American flavour.
- BBC World : Launched in Asia in 1991 as part of the Star TV stable, it was the early leader in contextualised news broadcasting for Asia. It was dropped summarily in 1994 from the northern beam of AsiaSat1 by Star TV for offending the Chinese government, thus nominally halving its distribution. In early 1996 the channel parted

company with Star TV and re-launched itself on PanAmSat satellites in the region: digitally compressed off the satellite Pas-2 to reach Southeast and Northeast Asia, and via analogue off Pas-4 for South and West Asia. BBC World also had extensive distribution deals with cable networks in Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, the Philippines and Malaysia, not to mention other deals in South and West Asia.

- ABN : Although owned largely by western media interests, ABN was a distinctly regional channel dealing exclusively with commercial news. Its original partners, with a 29.5 per cent share each, were Dow Jones, TV New Zealand and Telecommunication Incorporation of the US.
- CNBC Asia Pacific: A subsidiary of NBC of the US, this channel began broadcasting as ANBC in November 1994 on Wharf Cable in Hong Kong, and later diversified into a 24-hour business news channel CNBC Asia, and a general entertainment channel NBC Asia.
- CTN : Owned largely by Hong Kong interests, CTN positioned itself as the Chinese equivalent of CNN by providing all-Mandarin news and business reports as well as sports, lifestyle and documentary programming. Broadcasting out of its base in Hong Kong and utilising PanAmSat2, CTN targeted primarily the Taiwan market where it reached 80 per cent of the over 4 million households as early as the mid-1990s.
- Discovery Asia : Begun in the US as far back 1985 but a relative latecomer to the Asian region, the educational and documentary network Discovery Channel was launched in January 1994 on both Palapa B2P and Apstar 1. Yet by the end of 1995, it was already available in 3.1 million households across Asia, 2 million of them in Taiwan where Discovery Asia incorporated Mandarin subtitles to increase its market share, on the Indovision package in Indonesia, on Wharf Cable in Hong Kong, as well as cable systems in the Philippines, Thailand, Japan and Korea

- Others: National Geographic's inauguration in Asia in the late 1990s followed aggressive global expansion that saw its worldwide subscription touch 25 million. Though its rival Discovery Channel had a five-year headstart, National Geographic was launched on major satellite and cable networks in each market such as StarTV in India, Indovision in Indonesia, Astro in Malaysia, Eastern Television in Taiwan and Skycable in Philippines.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 3: What do you mean by Cross-border news?

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Q.4 : What are the three main types of coverage of transnational television?

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Q.5 : When was BBC World launched in Asia?

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3.6 CTV Network:

After 21 years of Liberal government in Canada, the Conservatives, under Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, came to power in 1957. This new government, after much lobbying by "private" broadcasters, passed a new Broadcasting Act in 1958, establishing the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG) to be the "watchdog" of Canadian broadcasting. Since its inception in 1936, this had been the domain of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) which independent "private" broadcasters had complained was both

their regulator and competitor.

Prior to 1958, the CBC had issued TV licences to itself for 7 TV stations (2 in Montreal) in 6 major Canadian cities. Lacking funds to properly cover all of Canada, the Government had to allow licensing of private stations in 35 other cities, all of which were obliged to carry programs from the CBC's Television Networks (French & English).

Responding to the public outcry for alternate choice from CBC programs, the BBG announced that they would consider applications for "second" television stations in eight major cities across Canada - Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver - public hearings to be held early in 1959. At this time Calgary and Edmonton were each served by a private station, and the others by the 7 CBC-owned stations.

It is Canada's largest privately or commercially owned network, and has consistently been placed as Canada's top-rated network since 2002. There has never been an official full name corresponding to the initials "CTV"; however, it is generally assumed to mean "Canadian Television", a branding used in a promotional campaign by the network in 1998, and also in pre-promotion for the network prior to its launch in 1961. However, that branding was dropped before the network's launch when the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation objected to it, claiming exclusive rights to the term "Canadian".

When the television regulations were being discussed in 1959, and subsequently during the second station hearings, numerous references were made to the desirability of sharing or exchanging programs among these stations. Three possibilities were discussed, although never in any systematic way: the provision of CBC programs to the newly licensed stations; arranging a simple program exchange by tape or film; or the operation of a full-fledged second network, privately owned. The first possibility, CBC participation, was introduced into the discussions only to be quickly abandoned. In November 1959, Edward Dunlop, a member of the BBG, asked Ouimet whether the CBC might divide its network service between existing affiliates and potential second stations. This had a precedent in radio, where the

CBC operated two English-language networks: one for its own stations and a number of private affiliates, the second for private stations serving essentially the same communities as were reached by the first network.

CTV (the Canadian Television Network) began operations with affiliates in eight cities: Vancouver (CHAN), Calgary (CFCN-TV), Edmonton (CFRN-TV), Winnipeg (CJAY), Toronto (CFTO), Ottawa (CJOH), Montreal (CFCF-TV) and Halifax (CJCH-TV).

At the outset, only three cities received programs live by microwave - Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto. For the other five stations, CTV programs were transmitted on the same microwave facilities leased by the CBC, but in hours the CBC was not using microwave. Those stations put the programs on videotape and then released them at the scheduled time. However, CTV contracted with the telephone system to extend the microwave westward to Vancouver by September 1962, and eastward to Halifax by the summer of 1963. Andrew Stewart, whom the network might have claimed as at least its godfather, declared on the opening program that the inauguration marked 'an important step in communications and another tie binding Canada together. '



3.7 LET US SUM UP

- Transnational television has not simply adapted to globalization but helps to fashion the new global order.
- Before and after World War II, when audio-visual broadcasting was being inaugurated amongst the wealthiest, most advanced nations of the West, global television or world television is now an increasingly visible and powerful component of the total accumulated system of television across the planet.
- Chalaby (2005) identifies four interconnected components of this planetary television system that are complexly integrated and changing.

- In 1950 and 1952, the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) and Radio Télévision Française (RTF) realized the first transnational television transmissions ever.
- On both sides of the Channel, the collaboration between the two national public broadcasting organisations BBC and RTF was celebrated as an important Franco-British partnership in a technology full of symbolic inscriptions.
- Eurovision, a television network that is part of the European Broadcasting Union was founded in the year 1954 in Geneva, Switzerland. It was set up for the purpose of exchanging TV programmes and, subsequently, TV news footage (via the daily Eurovision news exchange - EVN).
- Over the past couple of decades, cross-border television channels have been developing across the world. In South Asia, networks like Star TV and Zee TV have successfully challenged state broadcasters and opened up the television market.
- Transborder television channels have had different impacts in various media markets but they raise important issues regarding globalization wherever they develop.
- Towards the turn of the twentieth century the media and communications industry in Asia underwent quite a radical transformation.
- CTV is Canada's largest privately or commercially owned network, and has consistently been placed as Canada's top-rated network since 2002. There has never been an official full name corresponding to the initials "CTV"; however, it is generally assumed to mean "Canadian Television", a branding used in a promotional campaign by the network in 1998, and also in pre-promotion for the network prior to its launch in 1961.



3.9 FURTHER READING

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3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1 : Eurovision, a television network that is part of the European Broadcasting Union was founded in the year 1954 in Geneva, Switzerland. It was set up for the purpose of exchanging TV programmes and, subsequently, TV news footage (via the daily Eurovision news exchange - EVN).

Ans to Q No 2 : The first Eurovision Song Contest took place in Lugano, Switzerland.

Ans to Q No 3 : The word 'Cross-border news' means news that people consume (e.g. watch or read) on a monthly basis that is produced outside of the country in which they currently live.

Ans to Q No 4 : In terms of reach, three main types of coverage can be distinguished: multi-territory, pan-regional and global.

Ans to Q No 5 : 1991



3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very short questions

Q.1: What is transborder television?

Q 2: Name one television network from Canada.

Q 3: Expand BBC and RTF.

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1: What are the four interconnected components of this planetary television system that are complexly integrated and changing as described by Jean Chalaby?

Q 2: Write a short note on Eurovision.

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Describe briefly the transformation of the media and communications network in Asia during the 21st century.

Q 2: Elucidate on the French and British transnational television network exchange experiments in the 1950s.