

Integration, the Indian state and STAR TV: Policy and theory issues

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Abstract. Since the advent of STAR TV, television programming in India has transformed significantly. Television is no longer under strict government control. What are the implications for the government's national integration project? Will it strengthen or weaken the government's capacity for social control? Will it undermine the government's elaboration of a national identity? The paper addresses these questions. We begin by identifying the social forces that have shaped the turbulent career of the national integration project. The role of the changing television environment is then examined in relation to these forces. The analysis suggests that it is the growing unrest within civil society which poses the real danger to this integration project – not transborder satellite channels. It is argued that democracy can be furthered only by welding together disparate groups in civil society into a bloc that can force concessions from governing elites. Media scholars need to ask how media can play a role in this task.

1. Introduction

The Indian government is involved in two related integration processes. On the one hand, the government's economic "liberalization" policies increasingly enmesh various sectors of Indian society in global networks of production and consumption. On the other, government agencies are involved in the perennial task of maintaining political and social order in a tension-riven society. Historically, a key element of the second integration process has been successive governments' elaboration of an Indian "national identity" (Joshi, 1989; Varshney, 1993).

The government's accommodating response to the pan-Asian STAR TV initiative can be understood as an aspect of its involvement in the first integration process. Beginning in 1991, STAR TV's offerings included English language channels such as MTV, Prime Sports, and the BBC World Service. ZEE TV, which broadcasts in Hindi, was added in 1992. The Indian government, unlike some others, did not seriously attempt the difficult task of limiting the reception of these channels (Chan, 1993; Lee & Wang, 1995). To have done so, would have meant curbing the ability of transnational advertis-

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ers and program providers reaching a potentially significant audience. This would have run counter to the government's policy of fostering a climate of open investment and liberalized trade. It would also have run afoul of the middle classes and elites who were tuning into STAR TV (Pathania, 1994).

Responding to the competition, state-owned Doordarshan supplemented its regional-language channels and national network with five new satellite channels (Entertainment, Music, Business and Current Affairs, Enrichment) which provide similar programming to STAR TV. Doordarshan also extended the metro entertainment channel to the country's four metropolitan cities (Doordarshan, 1994). Among other things, this channel carries MTV (no longer with STAR). Privately-owned Indian language satellite channels ATN, Jain TV (both Hindi) and Sun TV (Tamil) also compete for audiences. Transnational program providers such as ESPN, CNN, and TNT have recently joined the fray with their own satellite channels while others such as HBO and Disney position themselves to do so (*India Today*, Nov. 15, 1995).

In short, television is no longer under strict government control. The pattern of supply of programming has transformed significantly. For those who can afford it, a rather staid state-controlled menu has given way to a relative abundance of domestic and foreign programming. What does this mean for the second integration process? Will it strengthen or weaken the government's capacity for social control in the national space? Will it undermine the government's elaboration of a national identity? If the new programming environment does constitute a threat to state control, should it be endorsed or opposed by those interested in democratic outcomes?

These questions are addressed in this paper. Our conceptual approach suggests that the most fruitful way of addressing these questions is by way of a two-step analysis. The first step is to identify the various social forces that have shaped and modified successive governments' national identity and national integration projects. The second step is to examine the role of the changing television programming environment in relation to these forces. Only in this way can we begin to get a sense of how relevant or irrelevant the new programming environment is to the operation of state power.

2. Conceptual approaches

How should we address the questions posed above? In media studies, conventional approaches begin with communication and its supposed effects on "national integration" and/or "national identity". The "modernization" theorists of the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., Lerner, 1958; Schramm, 1964) suggested that mass media could be a powerful homogenizing force for national integration in the Third World. The mass media, it was argued, could unshackle

people from traditional practices and rally them to a common set of modern values and beliefs, including loyalty to the nascent nation-state. This approach has been criticized for conceptualizing societal integration as a consensual process. The enduring economic, political and cultural divisions in nation-states were greatly devalued by modernization theorists; these divisions were assumed to be surface differences beneath which common ground must be found. Modernization theory, then, provided justifications for modernizing ruling elites as they used a variety of integrative mechanisms, including force, to bind peripheries in a subordinate and dependent way to the center (Samarajiva & Shields, 1990; Schudson, 1994).

Another conventional approach, and one more relevant to the task at hand, is the perspective offered by media/cultural imperialism discourses. The discourses, which emerged in the 1970s, were formulated with reference to Canada's experience of cross-border spill-over of US television and to the unequal flow of news and entertainment from the First World to the cultures of the Second and Third Worlds (e.g., Schiller, 1976, 1979; Hamelink, 1983). More recently, a different ideological variant of these discourses was evident in the 1993/94 round of the GATT negotiations. While the US called for the removal of quota restrictions on audiovisual products in the name of free trade and the free circulation of ideas, European interests argued for their retention in order to defend the integrity of European cultures – and to enhance the competitive position of domestic producers.

Applied to the current Indian television environment, media/cultural imperialism discourses would caution that "excessive" consumption of "western" or "western-like" television programs could damage, or even destroy, Indian national identity and the government's nation-building efforts. The policy implications of this perspective are clear; restrict the "excessive" consumption of this kind of programming and encourage the indigenous production of more "appropriate" fare thus fortifying indigenous identity.

Yet there are good reasons for questioning this line of thinking. First of all, an *a priori* assumption is made that large-scale ingestion of media artifacts is a central force in the life and death of collective identities and/or national integration projects. The problem here is that "[t]elevision's power is so strongly assumed that, rather than being the object of analysis, it tends to prescribe research practices and theoretical reasoning" (Lodzjak, 1986, p. 2; also Collins, 1990; Ferguson, 1992; Schlesinger, 1991). This media-centrism has the potential to greatly exaggerate television's social significance.

The problem is compounded by the fact that media/cultural imperialism discourses are bereft of any systematic understandings or explanations of the various social forces and contexts that shape the elaboration of national identity and national integration projects (Samarajiva & Shields, 1990, p. 94;

Morley & Robins, 1995; Schlesinger, 1987; Tomlinson, 1991). This "non-treatment" tends to obscure; a pure internally homogeneous national identity is portrayed as falling under the shadow of a malevolent global consumerist culture. While some of this must be taken seriously, nevertheless a fictional national unity is constructed that leaves the "us" on the inside undifferentiated (Donald, 1988, p. 2). It is worth asking who benefits from this fiction.

What is needed is a perspective that allows us to think in an open-ended manner about the role media play in relation to other factors in the large-scale drama of national identity construction and national integration. Philip Schlesinger suggests the following tact:

The problem as conventionally understood needs to be stood on its head. So far, work on and argument about communicative and cultural processes make gratuitous assumptions about the nation-state, national culture and national identity. All are taken to be unproblematic, and as communication is the central concern, they are handled as residual categories. I propose we reverse the terms of the argument: let us begin with the problem of how national identity is constituted and locate communication and culture within *that* problematic (1987, p. 259; emphasis in original).

Instead of placing media at the center of analysis and treating national identity and national integration as residual, we must begin with the problem of *how* national identity and national integration are constituted. It is *within* this broader inquiry that questions can be asked about the power of media (Morley & Robins, 1995, p. 72). Before embarking on these two levels of analysis, working definitions of our central categories are required.

3. National integration and national identity

The modernizationist notion of integration minimizes the possibility of fundamental societal conflict. By contrast, Anthony Giddens defines integration as a "reciprocity of practices", not merely as synonymous with either 'cohesion' or 'consensus'" (1981, p. 28). He distinguishes "social integration" – the reciprocity of practices between individuals in each other's presence – from system integration – the process of creating and sustaining relations between individuals and between collectivities across extended time and space. Following Giddens, we understand integration, whether economic, political or cultural, to intrinsically involve conflict and contestation – "the power relations sustained in regularised practices [i.e., integration] can be considered as reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence in interaction" (1981, p. 50).

Because our main concern is Indian national integration, primary focus is on the configuration of internal and external factors that have shaped and modified system integration processes within the boundaries of the territorial space known as India. Specifically, emphasis is placed on examining the ways in which governing elites, in a changing global context, attempt to exert control over groups and communities throughout India. With Giddens, we do not perceive the effectiveness of such control strategies as being complete: "However wide-ranging the control which actors have over others, the weak nevertheless always have some capabilities of turning resources back against the strong" (1981, p. 63).

Elaboration of an "official" national identity can be understood as a central plank of national integration projects. Such elaboration involves manipulation of symbols, values, and frames of meaning in order to bind diverse and widely distributed peoples around representations of the past (Gross, 1985, p. 65). Schlesinger suggests that national identity is best understood as a specific form of collective identity: "Such identities are emergent properties of collective action ... and [are] sustained by a dual process: one of inclusion that provides a boundary around 'us', and one of exclusion that distinguishes 'us' from 'them' [W]e should see such identities as constituted in action and as continually reconstituted in line with both internal dynamic and external balances of force" (1991, p. 300).

Extending Schlesinger's approach the suggestion is that Indian "national identity" be viewed as something which is continually contested. The task is to examine the strategies and mechanisms that are involved in its elaboration and to analyze its role in securing the dominance of given groups in society. Because sources of differentiation exist within nation-states (e.g., religion, class, language, ethnicity), multiple collective identities or even other national identities will probably co-exist, often in a subordinate and antagonistic way, with the official version.

In the section that follows, we examine the turbulent career of the national integration project in India, including the changing nature of attempts at crafting a national identity. The analysis is sensitized by the concepts outlined above.

4. National integration and national identity in India

Rajni Kohari argues that the basic contours and meaning of the nation-building project in India has changed drastically in the last few decades:

[There has been a shift] from a conception of unity based on accepting and integrating myriad diversities and a large array of interests to a conception

of national unity ... that is increasingly based on denying legitimacy to these diversities and excluding large segments of the population from the national mainstream ... (1988a, p. 2223).

For Kothari and others,¹ the ascendance of the exclusionary conception of integration has to do with the deterioration of the political institutional framework that was erected in the 1940s and 50s:

If things have gone wrong, it is a direct consequence of our deliberate erosion and destruction of the very instruments we had created to promote both economic and social development and national integration in a highly diverse and plural society ... highly disparate in access rights and opportunities. If what we face must be termed a crisis ... it is a crisis of institutions. And it is a crisis of institutions because we have destroyed the very *modus operandi* of their functioning – the whole framework of mediating between the government and the people, between the State and civil society ... (1989a, p. 178).

Before being gutted, Kothari argues, these institutions provided access points that hitherto excluded groups could use to gain a hearing and mechanisms for mediating conflicting demands and claims.

The Indian National Congress was a principal architect of these institutions. In the years before Independence (1947), the middle class-dominated Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi mobilized the masses into a national movement. Gandhi appealed to the masses and classes through various symbols and metaphors that cut across traditional caste, class, linguistic and territorial lines. The Congress leadership also repeatedly portrayed Congress as the only organization that could represent or embody the collective will of the people (Kothari, 1989b, p. 121–122).

This rhetorical strategy was undergirded by programs of action directed at freedom from colonial rule and at "national reconstruction". Massive non-cooperation and civil disobedience campaigns were organized against the British "other" while programs of "constructive work" were carried out among the newly "included" masses. The Congress' organizational base was rapidly expanded. A multi-tiered system was designed that penetrated deep into the social hinterland. Branches of the Congress were established throughout the country – at the regional and district level – bringing into the movement for the first time significant sections of the rural population. This organizational system "provided a functioning hierarchy of the nation-in-making" (Kothari, 1989a, p. 127).

The "nation-in-making" enterprise was carried forward after Independence by the Congress Party. It immediately faced a bloody crisis resulting from partition, the emergence of Pakistan, and the war over Kashmir that followed.

In part, this crisis was rooted in the failure of the nationalist movement to win over the Muslim League (Varshey, 1993, p. 243).² In this unstable context, Nehru and other Congress leaders sought to secure the nation-building endeavor by constructing an integrative political framework that would appeal to and draw together a wide-ranging diversity. As in the pre-independent era, integration was looked upon "not as mere aggregation that overrides multiplicity, but as a process of *ordering* the multiplicity through interlocking of the various strata and levels into a loose accommodation and held together by a "system" (Kothari, 1989b, p. 131; emphasis in original).

The constitutional framework was a key part of this "ordering" process. It introduced formal protections for the people against the encroachment of state authority. It also reserved places in representative institutions and government agencies for disadvantaged classes and cultural groups (Brass, 1990, pp. 3–4). The constitution also introduced universal suffrage and adopted the parliamentary party system. While allowing other political parties to develop under their own steam, Congress continued to build its structure of political affiliations, weaving these into the organizational framework inherited from the nationalist movement. In this way, Congress assumed the role of the ruling party, becoming the "strong and visible 'centre' towards which the various 'peripheries' were drawn through the competitive mechanisms of democratic politics" (Kothari, 1989b, p. 131; Brown, 1985, p. 358).

As the legitimacy of this political framework or "Congress System" spread, the demands and aspirations of various groups found their place within the framework of one-party dominance, either as part of the factional network within the Congress Party or as pressures from outside, exerted through other political parties. Kothari explains why the Congress System was pivotal to the crafting of an inclusive Indian national identity:

[I]t provided the *modus vivendi* of the Indian enterprise in nation-building, the "net-work" through which the Indian nation reverberated Without the Congress System both the colonial state and the Westminster model would have left out a large part of the Indian social mosaic. *With it*, the Indian state struck deep roots and acquired a national character and a unifying credo precisely because it struck roots. With it also, the new ... institutions of parliament, a competitive party system and a framework of adjudication and settlement ... as well as a framework of mediating in community affairs whenever these showed signs of tensions and violence slowly became the basis of new identity formations It produced and permeated a tempo and temper of nationalism and national identity that, without steamrolling any significant constituency, provided a new framework of discourse and deliberation ... (1988a, p. 2225; emphasis in original).

Yet the system did have inequitable features. While Congress opened up to middle and lower middle caste and class-based interests in order to gain electoral support it still left the poor and underprivileged out if its scope. The Congress also discredited or suppressed those who threatened the integration project – for example, the secessionists (e.g., Tamil nationalists) who advanced competing national identities and the communists who advocated revolution (Brass, 1990, pp. 7–8).

Cracks began to appear in the Congress System in the 1950s and 60s. The government's discourse of equality, justice and socialism increasingly contradicted the reality of economic policies that did not meet the growing demands of the newly "included". The socialist-inspired development model, which stressed self-reliance, state ownership and intervention and urban-based industrialization, delivered some economic growth but there was little effort to ensure the masses benefited (Kothari, 1988a, p. 2225). The limits of political accommodation – the hallmark of the Congress System – had been reached within the existing configuration of economic structures (Frankel, 1978, pp. 201–202). For example, it seemed impossible to reconcile Congress' claim to represent the interests of all groups, including the propertied classes, with acquiescence to pressures from below for land reform. There were signs that party elites (e.g., members of dominant landed castes who had "captured" local-level party organizations) opposed prioritization of such reform (Frankel, 1987, p. 200). In the industrial sector, the more productive enterprises were privately owned, and the government had to capitalize on this despite its socialist rhetoric. Consequently, the government relaxed controls on a range of industries thus loosening its grip on economic policy and relying on just those economic groups who would strongly oppose transformations aimed at eliminating structural inequalities (Brown, 1985, p. 374). The self-reliance model began to spring leaks: a foreign exchange crisis and low agricultural productivity led to growing reliance on foreign aid. This dependency was used to pry open some key industries to private domestic and foreign investment (Omvedt, 1982).

Erosion of the Congress Party's hegemonic project was manifested in widespread social unrest, the contraction of the party's popular support base, and the emergence of Indira Gandhi as leader of a bitterly divided party. Gandhi and her allies argued that political conciliation must be subordinated to the alleviation of the economic plight of the masses. The distributive issue was addressed, in part, by borrowing funds from the IMF and the World Bank. In return, the government opened up parts of the economy to private domestic and foreign investment. At the same time as the central government increased its dependence on international institutions, it asserted its independence from the lower-level tiers of the Congress System. In effect, as power centralized in

Delhi, the various intermediate structures which had addressed local problems and conflicts were gutted.

Without these structures, the state was unable to diffuse crises that were emerging in different parts of the country (e.g., Narang, 1986, pp. 99–100). Against this backdrop, Gandhi declared the 1975 State of Emergency. Opposition leaders were arrested, a news black-out was imposed, organizations were banned, and people were imprisoned without trial. Ousted in 1977, Indira Gandhi returned to office in the 1980 with the backing of industrialists and the urban middle classes. A renewed emphasis on the liberalization of the economy followed. In the face of growing social unrest, state agencies relied heavily on force to maintain social order. Rhetorically, government sources equated the fate of Indira Gandhi with the fate of India (if you oppose her the country will disintegrate). To garner electoral support, Gandhi, her allies, and many in the opposition, increasingly reverted to the Machiavellian strategy of manipulating Hindu-Muslim tensions (Brass, 1990, p. 202).

In the past decade, the trends delineated above have continued. On the economic front, Rajiv Gandhi, supported by a new ruling group, pursued policies aimed at integrating segments of Indian society into the global economy. This new group, according to Kothari, was "moved less by attending to the political process and more by conceptions that have emerged in other spheres – technology, informatics, 'internal security', management, marketing and advertising, commercial forestry and agribusiness, export-import, international tourism ... And for this it has mobilized talent from ... the professors, from NRIs [non-resident Indians], from those who have worked with the World Bank, from new salesmen of environment, culture and communication" (1989a, pp. 235–6). Jettisoning the tired rhetoric of populist socialism, the Rajiv Gandhi government conceded more and more areas of the economy to private domestic and foreign investors. This process was accelerated in 1991 when the present government led by Narasimha Rao, with the support of the IMF and the World Bank, proceeded to dismantle much of the apparatus of economic regulation.³ For example, restrictions were removed in order to allow 51 per cent foreign equity in all industries involved in advanced technology. Furthermore, restrictions on capital-goods imports have been eased and private investment is now allowed in the power sector (*India Today*, Oct. 15, 1995). The government has permitted private domestic and foreign investors to compete with the government in such sectors as broadcast and telecommunications (Mody, 1995). These measures and others have increased substantially the role of national and transnational corporations in shaping the political economy of India.

The emphasis on privatization has been intertwined with a commitment to "high-tech leap-frogging" as a route to economic development. The Rajiv

Gandhi government prioritized such sectors as telecommunications and computer software development, for example. This policy thrust benefited certain segments of the business community and the middle classes. Thus, almost all of the government's massive allocation of resources for the expansion of telecommunication network flowed to urban areas where only one quarter of the population lives. The primary beneficiaries were the businesses, particularly those in the export-oriented sectors of the economy (e.g., software development), that demanded enhanced telecommunications services. Telephone service was also extended to many in the urban middle and upper classes (Fernandes, 1989).

On the political front, successive governments have continued to employ coercion as the primary means of dealing with social unrest.⁴ For example, in 1987 the central government responded to continued separatist agitation by Sikhs in the Punjab by imposing a state of emergency. Civil liberties were dissolved and the state was placed under military control.

The perennial tensions in Hindu-Muslim relations also escalated at this time. In the Shah Bano case, Rajiv Gandhi, under great pressure from Muslim leaders, supported the decision that made Islamic personal law superior to civil law in matters concerning the "maintenance" of divorced women. Responding to Hindu outrage at this decision, the government opened a religious site at Ayodhya to Hindu pilgrimage – a site that was claimed by both Hindus and Muslims (Varshney, 1993, p. 249). Muslim demonstrations ensued and a bloody backlash from Hindu groups followed.

This series of events fueled support for fast-growing Hindu nationalist groups like the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). Since independence, these groups argue, successive governments have pampered the minorities at the expense of the Hindu majority. This has transpired, the argument runs, because Hindus have failed to unite. In the contrast to the "official" doctrine on national identity, which ostensibly celebrates India's ethnic and religious heterogeneity, Hindu fundamentalists advocate Hinduism as the source of India's identity and as the only real hope for national cohesiveness. The implication is that non-Hindu groups can be a part of India by assimilation only (Varshney, 1993).

The calculations of the various political parties have been affected by the increase in Hindu nationalism. In the 1989 election, the sizable support for the BJP among Hindus led Congress to compete for the communal vote, thus abandoning its traditional appeal to the Muslim minority. Rao's government has continued to court the Hindu majority. In the wake of the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992, the country was swept by violence against Muslims. In many quarters, the government was viewed as being complicit in these events because it abdicated its responsibility to ensure the safety of a minority group

(Bonner et al., 1994). The government has also been criticized for its violent suppression of ongoing separatist activity in Muslim-dominated Kashmir. For example, an editorial in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (Oct. 23, 1993) states: "In the name of fighting... sessionist militants, those responsible for the governance of this great country are themselves hitting at the very foundation of our democratic republic. Such acts of folly, leading to insensate violence on the part of those entrusted to govern, do not evoke respect and consent but provoke revulsion and angry subordination. A republic does not last by enforced submission.... It has just the reverse effect".

The preceding paragraphs have traced the ways in which the inclusive national integration project in India has been replaced by one which is exclusive. This transpired because the political and economic framework, within which the earlier secular notion of Indian identity was embedded, failed to redistribute wealth. Against the backdrop of growing unrest, a broad-based hegemonic political process was replaced by a form of Machiavellian politics that relied heavily on centralized decision making, the exercise of coercion, the fomenting of communal tensions for political gain, and a more restricted hegemonic project aimed at the predominantly Hindu urban middle and upper classes. A new model of integration has emerged in which exclusion is understood as "a necessary correlate of preserving unity and building a strong and powerful nation that is seen to be besieged by hostile forces out to destabilize and undermine the nation..." (Kothari, 1988a, p. 2227).

This model is giving rise to the phenomenon of "Two Indias". The first consists of the largely Hindu middle and upper classes who "have access to modern technology, access to sources of privilege... access to the knowledge systems that are very much tied to the structure of privilege, who are getting into the world economic market" (Kothari, 1988b, p. 2591). The second consists of the tens of millions who "are not able to have access to these advantages and privileges, the labouring classes, the unemployed... the large masses of untouchables and bonded labourers, large sections of women and children, the tribals... the various nationalities that were beginning to assert themselves for political rights but are being increasingly visited by state repression and terror" (p. 2591). It is this India which is excluded. Here is found mass illiteracy, poor health care, and high infant mortality rates. Successive governments have given little attention to building bridges of mediation between the two Indias. As Kothari puts it, those in the second India have "been left to stew in their own juices... quarantined away from the first and more dynamic world..." (p. 2591).

It is during the ascendancy of the exclusionary model of integration that television emerges as a potentially significant social force. The ways in which

television has influenced and been influenced by this exclusionary model is explored in the following section.

5. The "old" programming environment and integration

The forces responsible for the massive expansion of state-controlled television in the 1980s have been well-documented. Analysis place particular emphasis on the political motivations behind this substantial redirection of resources. The SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment), the launching of India's first generation national satellite (INSAT), Indra Gandhi's Special Expansion Plan, and the government's support for television serials such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, have all been viewed as attempts by governing elites to extend their political and ideological control (e.g., Chorpad, 1986; Mitra, 1993; Mody, 1988; Pendakur, 1991; Thomas, 1988; Rajagopal, 1993).

The Satellite Instruction Television Experiment (SITE) began August 1975. The experiment, which utilized a NASA satellite for a year, was ostensibly aimed at gaining experience in development, testing and management of a satellite-based instructional system, particularly in rural areas. Yet little energy was devoted to the design of educational programming. Also, long before the results of the educational impacts were available, the cabinet decided in favor of acquiring a satellite-based communication system. From this, Arvind Rajagopal deduces, "[i]t could not have been a failure or oversight in policy to make so little room for effective education in SITE. Rather, the exercise was seen as an opportunity to gain expertise ... concerning satellite hardware and management, as the government attempted to extend control over the information people received ..." (1993, p. 96).

This interpretation is given credence when one considers the political context in which SITE was implemented. Indra Gandhi declared the State of Emergency weeks before the commencement of the experiment. With all other media suspended during the Emergency, Doordarshan used the satellite capability to broadcast news that provided the governing elites' interpretation of events. Bella Mody argues that this demonstration of the utility of satellites in delivering propaganda to a significant population played a key role in the decision to invest in the first generation of INSAT satellites that were launched in 1982-83 (1988, p. 5). The government's subsequent use of the expanded television infrastructure supports Mody's claim (Thomas, 1988).

The medium very much suited the form of top-down authoritarian politics that predominated in this period. As discussed earlier, successive governments led by Indra Gandhi demolished most of the institutions that provided points of contact between the state and the various groups that populate civil society. This institutional vacuum was filled, in part, by television. The expansion of

television enabled Indra Gandhi and her supporters to make direct demagogic appeals to at least some segments of civil society (see below). She attempted to use television to cultivate her image as "deliverer", and to engineer majority support for her government's policies. Her heir, Rajiv Gandhi, used television in a similar way, particularly in the lead up to the 1989 national elections.

The effectiveness of these strategies are, however, open to question. In both cases, Doordarshan was widely and derisively criticized for its blatant bias (Pendakur, 1991; Randolph, 1992). To conclude that this cynicism indicates the inherent powerlessness of mass media would be a mistake. It can be conjectured that this mistrust can be explained largely by political context. In a period when state control is marked primarily by coercion, manipulation, and insensitivity to demands, it is not too surprising that sections of the citizenry would be very wary of the state's political programming.

Who were the primary beneficiaries of the rapid expansion of television? At the beginning of the 1980s, Doordarshan's small clutch of transmitters (19 in 1981) provided access to services in an around the major metropolitan areas. Doordarshan's coverage increased dramatically with the advent of satellite and the large-scale installation of transmitters. By the end of 1985, the television network covered 53 per cent of the population, and 62 percent in 1988 (Singhal & Rogers, 1989, p. 66). By 1993, Doordarshan's 553 transmitters enveloped about 84 per cent (715 million) of the population (about 856 million). Doordarshan estimates that the number of television households increased from 6.8 million in 1985 to 22.5 million in 1989, to an estimated 40.4 million in 1993 (Doordarshan, 1994).

The distribution of television sets is highly uneven. For the year 1993, Doordarshan estimates that 30 per cent (12 million) of the 40.4 million television households were in rural areas. Assuming five members per household, Doordarshan concludes that there were 60 million rural family viewers. By adding to this the 50 million viewers that are believed to watch community television, Doordarshan estimates that 110 million (about 20 per cent) of India's rural population of 610 million accessed television (Doordarshan, 1994). From Doordarshan's figures, it can be estimated that in 1993 there were approximately 140 million urban family viewers (about 60 percent of the urban population). Furthermore, given the cost of receivers, only the affluent think about owning a television (e.g., Fernandes, 1989; Singhal & Rogers, 1989, p. 67; Rajagopal, 1993).

Initially, the rapid deployment of distribution hardware was not matched by new programming within Doordarshan. Rajagopal points to the contradictory source of this state of affairs: "While on the one hand television serves as a technology of expanding state power over society, on the other hand ... given the security of tenure government employees enjoy regardless of performance,

and the virtual absences of incentives for merit, there is a powerful tendency toward institutional inertia" (1993: 93). Yet a consequence of growing middle class access to television was the recognition by industry that television was potentially a very fruitful advertising medium. This realization, coupled with the fact Doordarshan was always in need of money for its expansion, led to television increasingly carrying commercially sponsored programs.⁵ This programming, often privately produced, was primarily entertainment-oriented and aimed at the middle and upper classes – particularly the wave of popular soap operas such as *Hum Log*, *Buniyad*, and *Rajani*. Though importation of foreign entertainment programs increased, their share of overall transmission time remained low (Mody, 1988, p. 9).

Perhaps Doordarshan's biggest success, in terms of audience reach, was their serializations in the late 1980s of the great Hindu epics, *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These programs have been perceived by a number of analysts as blatant attempts by governing elites to circulate a set of glorified Hindu-centered images of what constitutes Indian national identity (e.g., Mitra, 1993; Rajagopal, 1993, p. 108; Randolph, 1992). Ananda Mitra argues:

The image of India that is produced and reproduced by Doordarshan, and circulated as the dominant and preferred one is clearly a Hindu image ... Television serials such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* have constantly co-opted religious rituals and ceremonies as central issues ... While [these] ... are the two principal serials that were concerned with Hindu theology, there are a variety of other programmes that have appeared after the two ... In all these serials, a certain set of similar signs have been used to signify the Hindu religion ... [Thus] Doordarshan plays a crucial role in circulating an ideologically correct national Hindu image and, consequently, generating an ideological struggle to question and challenge those images and practices that marginalize large parts of the social arena ... Hindi ... is considered to be the quintessential Hindu language, in which all the primary Hindu texts were composed. Consequently Hindi is also connected to Hinduism. On Doordarshan, this connection is emphasized by using Hindi as the language of serials ... that concern Hindu religious figures and practices. On a broader note, the National Network programmes on Doordarshan, constantly reproduce Hindi as the national language (1993, pp. 40–42).

Mitra suggests that Doordarshan has played a highly significant role in elaborating a Hindu-centric national identity. His textual analysis raises interesting and important connections, but the problem is that his analysis tends to assume rather than demonstrate the centrality and power of the media. From our perspective, it is not possible to fully assess the power of the media without

contextualizing its operation and reception. For example, Mitra takes little note of the fact that tens of millions of people, particularly in rural areas, had little or no access to television to begin with (see earlier discussion). They were simply not available to be positioned by Doordarshan's texts. Further, questions need to be asked about what kind of television viewers were more likely to watch Doordarshan's Hindu-centric offerings. Recent evidence suggests that Hindi serials are particularly popular in the north and west of India, but are a good deal less attractive to viewers in the east and south (Doordarshan, 1993). Only by taking these factors into account can we begin to get a sense of who was actually exposed to Doordarshan's ideological images.

Finally, the influence of Doordarshan's texts on those who do view is very much dependent on the ways in which audience members are positioned by various discourses, practices and contexts (e.g., those associated with religion, region, class). These discourses, practices and contexts may offer constructions that reinforce or contradict those in the Doordarshan texts. Lloyd Randolph gives a sense of the dynamics of the former:

Some have argued that the emergence of a national Hindu identity [on television] automatically enhances communalism, the stereotyping and defaming of community differences that fuel polarisation, mobilisation and confrontation. I am not so sure. The "Hindu" content of the mega-series has not been explicitly communal ... [B]ut the mega-series in conjunction with the outlook and practice of the Vishva Hindu Parishad and other 'national' Hindu organizations, opens the way contextually to communalize the series. The programmes may be making it possible for Hindu mobilisation and cultural transformation to occur ... For example, the celebration of Ram in *Ramayana* seems likely to have helped fuel the agitation to build a temple near ... the Babri mosque at Ayodhya ... The intersecting of the mega-series with the revivalism and fundamentalism of national Hindu movements and politics is not only undermining and displacing the localism and diversity of religious diversity. It has the potential for weakening the pluralist toleration and inclusiveness of pre-TV religious identity and esteem (1992, p. 1495).

As Randolph suggests, in the wider socio-political context which was marked by growing Hindu fundamentalism and communal tensions, Doordarshan's subsequent Hindu-centric texts may very well have reinforced the beliefs of those viewers (e.g., BJP supporters) who were predisposed to the fundamentalist case.

The evidence and arguments presented in this section indicate that the inhabitants of Kothari's "dynamic first world" were the beneficiaries of the massive investment in the state-owned television network that took place in

the 1980s. These included: the ruling party elites who used the new infrastructure to appease and cultivate the support of the growing urban middle classes; the middle and upper classes; the government agencies that reaped the benefits of Doordarshan's rapidly expanding revenue base; the industrialist and advertising agencies that were provided an important means of targeting the middle classes; the national and transnational hardware manufacturers that benefited from the state's outlay on distribution technology and the outlay by individuals on receivers; the purveyors and users of Hindu fundamentalism who may have benefited somewhat from Doordarshan's attempts at promoting a Hindu national identity. The inhabitants of the "second world" – the rural and urban poor, the laboring classes, the tribals, the unemployed – were the losers; losing out on resources that could have been used to alleviate their problems.

Yet we would not want to overestimate the centrality of the contribution of the old programming environment to the government's exclusionary integration project during this period. Earlier analysis indicates that a number of more profound forces operated to maintain and reproduce this project: a centralized power structure that was insensitive to the interests and demands of those in the "second world"; a powerful police and military apparatus that was used to quell unrest in the "second world" while providing security to the first; economic policies that increasingly integrated elements of the first world into global circuits of production and consumption; and the rise of a virulent form of Hindu fundamentalism that sought to homogenize and marginalize. In this section, we attempted to explore the role of the old programming environment in relation to these modes of inclusion/exclusion.

6. The "new" programming environment and integration

From 1991 to the present, the pattern of supply of television programming has transformed. A variety of transborder satellite channels are delivering an ever-expanding menu of domestic and foreign fare. The menu has been added to by Doordarshan as part of its aggressive response to the competition. More transnational program providers are reportedly planning to launch satellite channels. Is this new programming environment contributing to the integration project in the same way as the old one? What are the continuities and discontinuities? Because the new environment is still in flux, the answers offered are necessarily tentative.

It is often asserted that loss of communication sovereignty translates into a loss of state control across the board. In this section, it suggested that the relation may be more complex in the Indian case. That is, we argue that some

elements of the new programming environment may reinforce the state's integration project, while other elements may pose a threat.

With a footprint stretching from Turkey to Japan, the STAR TV network was developed to deliver relatively affluent Asian audiences to transnational businesses and advertisers. The Indian government's "open door" policy toward STAR TV resulted from the interplay of a number of factors including: strong government commitment to attracting foreign investment; pressure from the IMF and World Bank to liberalize the economy; and the need to respond to the changing tastes and expectations of the middle and upper classes (Pathania, 1994).

Of India's 40.4 million television households, Doordarshan estimates that by end of 1993, 6.2 million (15.4 per cent) had satellite dishes (Doordarshan, 1994). But STAR TV and other foreign satellite systems have also taken advantage of the existing cable networks to reach audiences. According to a recent report, the number of homes that have access to satellite and cable channels increased from 7.3 million in 1993 to 12 million in 1994. Most of these households are located in urban areas (*India Today*, March 31, 1995: 122).⁶ If particular obstacles are removed – the growing cable bottleneck, for example – the reach of STAR TV and other foreign satellite channel entrants is likely to increase rapidly. Many of the existing cable systems offer limited channel width. Further, because most current cable operators have not incorporated addressable subscriber management systems into their networks, there appears little incentive for companies such as HBO or ESPN to launch pay channels (*India Today*, August 15, 1995, pp. 104–5). However, Doordarshan does appear receptive to the idea of carrying foreign satellite channels on its satellite system as long as they are pay channels (i.e., they do not compete for advertising). In this scenario, Doordarshan would invest in the subscription-collection infrastructure (*India Today*, March 31, 1995, p. 121).

For those who can afford to access Doordarshan and the foreign satellite channels, there is now a relative abundance of domestic and foreign programming to choose from. The high ratings for Hindi serials on Doordarshan and the popularity of Zee TV, which broadcasts in Hindi and provides programs that focus on Indian themes and characters, suggests a preference for domestic over foreign programming. Yet, as the Doordarshan (1993) study cited earlier indicates, most of the popularity for Hindi programming is accounted for by high ratings in the north and west of the country. Hindi programming (carried by Doordarshan and Zee TV) has very few viewers in the south. For those in the south with access, a number of regional language satellite services provide more relevant programming. SUN TV, Asianet, Gemini TV, and JJ TV broadcast in Tamil. Undaya TV broadcasts in Kannada and Gemini TV

and Eenadu TV broadcast in Telugu. To maximize audience size, there are indications that STAR TV and other foreign satellite channels (e.g., the new Sony Entertainment Channel) will increasingly move toward provision of local language fare, particularly Hindi programming. This strategy may also aid in appealing groups such as the BJP who warn of a "cultural invasion" (Pathania, 1994, p. 8; Pendakur & Kapur, forthcoming).

In one sense, the emergence of the new programming environment can be understood as reinforcing the exclusionary integration project. A key element of this project has been the placation of the burgeoning middle-classes.⁷ The new programming environment aids in this process by satisfying the middle class demand for increased program choice. Because of its competitive nature, the environment also appears more sensitive to their tastes. This "placation effect" will increase in significance as more of the middle classes join the ranks of those who can access the various satellite channels. Further, the various regional language satellite services such as Sun TV are beginning to meet the hitherto neglected demand of various language groups to have entertainment and other fare in their own vernacular.

Yet this same dynamic may also operate to undermine television as an apparatus of state control. In the old environment, the government had more or less total control over what was televised within the country.⁸ This made it an attractive political management tool – both in terms of elaborating a national identity by way of Doordarshan's entertainment programs, for example, and by controlling news.⁹ In India's new television programming environment, these strategies may be undercut. Foreign satellites are offering a changed (and varying) menu of images and prescriptions from which middle class viewers may draw on in constructing their identity. These images and prescriptions, whether carried by English or Hindi channels, may sit uncomfortably with Hindu fundamentalist notions, for example. The old program environment was not devoid of this kind of tension, but it is likely to be much more prevalent in the new. Further, the proliferation of satellite channels, particularly regional-language channels, may lead to different notions of "nation" and "national identity" circulating through segments of the middle class.

The new programming environment may also pose a threat to state control because it has ended the government's monopoly control over televised news programming. Governing elites have already expressed concern that coverage of "sensitive" Indian issues by foreign news networks may trigger political instability. The BBC and CNN were accused of sparking a Hindu backlash against Indian Muslims after they showed Muslims in Bangladesh and Pakistan destroying Hindu temples. According to Krishna Kishore, these global news sources threaten Doordarshan's policy of not naming which communities were killing each other (1994, p. 100). The government has also been

critical of the BBC's coverage of the ongoing struggle in Kashmir (*India Today*, July 15, 1995, p. 99). Of course, the interpretive frameworks offered by these new sources may also contradict the official line on a whole range of issues. From the government's perspective, this problem is exacerbated by the long-standing and widespread distrust of Doordarshan's political programming which makes alternative news sources attractive.

Growth of the new environment along existing lines is likely to enhance state control by contributing to the placation of the middle and upper classes. Yet the government's ability to control politically important news programming is being undercut. The plurality of representations that may increasingly circulate in the new environment would render ineffective any attempts at propagating a highly selective version of national identity and culture. Given this state of affairs, should the new programming environment be endorsed or opposed by those interested in democratic outcomes?

7. Conclusion: Between market and state?

Earlier analysis suggests that there is a crisis of representation in India. The excluded groups have little opportunity to voice their aspirations because of the lack of interaction and communication between civil society and state agencies at various levels. Their claims for economic, political and cultural rights are often ignored or suppressed.

The new programming environment may pose problems for the government but it will do little to address this crisis. A primary impulse in the development of this new environment is the desire to considerably enlarge the space for commercial speech – speech produced by and for national and transnational corporations to promote their products and images to middle and upper class audiences. This dynamic will give rise to "pragmatic pluralism" primarily (Blumler, 1992, pp. 32–3). This form of pluralism yields only that amount and those forms of diversity that are likely to pay. This can be contrasted with "principled pluralism" which refers to the provision of space for the exchange of a plurality of experiences and viewpoints, particularly minority ones, as well as "politically-challenging" programs.¹⁰ To the extent that principled pluralism does occur, it will be consumed by the middle classes and elites primarily.

Pradip Thomas suggests that the existing state system should be dismantled and an alternative public service broadcasting model be inserted into the new environment: "[A] decentralised PSB system in India, within a partially de-regulated framework may be the only way to allow for the democratisation of broadcasting in India, ensure access, participation and the respect for the 'many worlds and many voices that make up Indian society'" (1993, p. 20).

Over the years, a number of commissions have recommended alternative public service broadcasting models for Doodarshan (e.g., Verghese Committee Report in 1979, Joshi Committee in 1983). These were side-lined by the elites in office. Thomas criticizes the commissions for "their inability to moor alternatives outside the domain of State control ..." (p. 29). Referencing the BBC model, he advocates a PSB system that would be relatively autonomous of political and commercial interests. It would provide, he argues, a mix of programming catering to diverse needs of the citizenry. Further, he argues that a serious attempt must be made to provide access to all, irrespective of class, caste or status. Critically for Thomas, the ethic of public service and responsibility must suffuse its operation. He concludes, "if such imperatives are treated as peripheral concerns to the debate on the future of broadcasting in India, the further marginalization of the poor in India will become inevitable" (p. 31).

While having much sympathy with this attempt at imagining television as a vibrant public sphere, we have some problems with Thomas' position. First of all, his approach to addressing the wider issue of the crisis of representation in Indian society seems quite media-centric. Thomas assumes that a public service model of mass media is key to the rejuvenation of democratic processes. Given this assumption, the policy implication seems to be to deploy the model as quickly as possible in order to empower a plurality of citizens. If Thomas' analysis had been informed by an examination of the forces responsible for the crisis of representation, would he have assigned such centrality to media policy? Would he have suggested a more fundamental agenda? Our point here is not denigrate the potential role of mass media in democratic projects. Rather our concern is with ascertaining the weight "media" and "media policy" should be accorded in such projects.

Secondly, when imagining the implementation of the PSB model, Thomas does not really flesh-out the institutional prerequisites. For example, he does not tell us what the political system would have to look like for the PSB model to be implemented in the way he intends. Writing in the European context, a foremost advocate of the public service model suggests that the operation of the PSB model presupposes an open government, the re-definition of sovereignty, and the establishment of a strong democratically-elected parliament able to support media "freedoms", for example Keane (1991, p. 147). Do these conditions (and more) pertain in the Indian case? Again, an interrogation of the Indian political system may have provided Thomas with an agenda that would have been logically prior to the implementation of the PSB model.

Democracy in India can be moved forward by challenging the modes of inclusion/exclusion that were discussed earlier. Since the early 1990s, there have been signs that these modes are being resisted by myriad movements and

groups: a variety of regional upsurges and movements for cultural autonomy, a range of ecological movements, a women's movement, anti-communal movements, a movement for homelands for tribals and hill people (Kothari, 1989c, 1995, p. 166; Routledge, 1993). These struggles for rights and liberties, Kothari points out, "[consist] of a stream of initiatives and responses, still highly scattered, often at cross purposes, involving quite a lot of fragmentation and tension... yet in many ways [they are] the only real source of hope in an otherwise dismal scenario" (1995, p. 166). For the most part, these various groups and movements are unable to open up the machinery of the state system.

It is the growing unrest within civil society which poses the real danger to the state's exclusionary integration project – not transborder satellite channels. The fundamental task that looms is to weld together, where possible, many of the disparate groups in civil society into a counter-hegemonic bloc that can force concessions from governing elites. This requires the development of new spaces in civil society where groups can organize and communicate in order to more effectively fend off threats or assert rights and claims. Of course, some of the claims for recognition and equality may prove to be mutually exclusive. Situated outside of the parliamentary and party framework, a key task for this new form of organization is to develop credibility as somehow representing voices of those in the "second world" and perhaps beyond – in Kothari's terms it should project itself as the "conscience-keepers of the country". Are there media configurations that can aid in these tasks?

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Notes

1. For example, Brass (1990), Narang (1986), and Varshney (1993).
2. It is important to note that the British strategy of "divide and rule", which included playing-up the religious differences of Hindus and Muslims, also worked against the grain of the Congress' inclusive eclecticism (Frankel, 1978; Kothari, 1989b, p. 127).
3. These organizations had assisted the Indian government with a balance-of-payments crisis that ensued the Gulf War.
4. Interestingly, nearly a third of the army is normally deployed on internal security tasks (*India Today*, October 31, 1992, p. 15).
5. Mody points out that the decision by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry (in which Doodarshan is housed) to accept advertising income was conditioned by the desire to gain financial autonomy from the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance. She notes

- that Doordarshan's revenues from advertising spots increased from US \$0.64 million in 1976 to US \$80 million in 1986 (1988, p. 9).
6. Pathania (1994) reports that this penetration, together with STAR TV's cheaper audience rates, has resulted in STAR TV siphoning off significant advertising revenues from Doordarshan (e.g., in 1993 STAR TV and ZEE TV are estimated to have accounted for 20 per cent of total advertising revenue).
 7. Quoting a *Business Week* article, Pendakur & Kapur (forthcoming) suggest that the middle class is growing at about 5 per cent per annum.
 8. With the exception of cross-border spill-over from Pakistan, for example.
 9. This control was of course not complete. Alternative frames were offered by the print media. Successive governments' blatant bias with respect to television news coverage has been widely discussed in newspapers and magazines.
 10. At this stage, we are still unclear as to whether regional language satellite channels are contributing to a "principled pluralism" by covering hitherto neglected social issues.

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Professionals in search of professionalism: Journalists' dilemma in four Maghreb states

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Abstract. This qualitative field study examines the major educational and training programs in journalism in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia and difficulties posed by the political, legal and media structural factors in the application of professional skills acquired through journalism education. Interviews with journalists, academics, students and media administrators in North Africa reveal that a variety of constraints are adversely affecting professionalism in journalism and contributing to the disillusionment of an increasing number of professional journalists. Implications for journalism education are considered.

Introduction

North African countries of Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia – collectively known as the Maghreb nations – have pushed for professional education and training of journalists through government-sponsored mass communication institutes and specialized media workshops. The institutes have a combined enrollment of hundreds of students, a number of whom upon graduation and some journalistic experience pursue further media studies at pan-Arab institutions like the Arab States Broadcasting Union or at universities in Western Europe and North America. But the restrictive media environment owing to political, legal and structural factors makes it quite difficult for such professionally trained journalists to practice their skills with a high degree of professionalism. The result is that an increasing number of well-educated journalists are said to find themselves disillusioned with journalism and turn to other communication fields.

This paper examines the major journalism education programs in the four North African states and the difficulties encountered in practicing professional skills acquired through journalism education. This qualitative study is based on field research by the author in Morocco and Tunisia in May 1994. In view of the political insurgency in Algeria since early 1992 and the U.S. State Department's travel advisory on Libya, research about Algeria and Libya was conducted at their information offices in Morocco and Tunisia. Specifically,