UNIT 23 REVOLUTION IN COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Structure

23.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will examine some of the key issues that arise from the present communication and information revolution. After going through this unit you should be able to:

●   identify the channels of international communications,

●   discuss the issues that arise from the rapid advances in communication technologies,

●   explain the position of the developing countries on some key issues in communications, and

●   identify the important features of the present communications and informations order.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Dramatic changes are sweeping our world. Many have their causes or effects which can be traced to developments in the information and communication sectors. With the advent of satellites and digital technologies the speed and capacity of communication has outpaced our wildest expectations. Satellites in orbit have transformed communications both within and between nations. The cost of communication services in no longer related to distance and terrain. The ongoing digital revolution in communication has virtually eliminated traditional technical limitations in the provision of services. There is no longer a technological distinction between voice, text, data, and video services. As electronic networks spread, there is no longer a clear demarcation between many national and international networks.

The diffusion of these new technologies began in the 1980s and they are yet to have their full impact felt. Their impact is primarily being felt in the economic activities within and between nations, hasteing the process of interdependence. But they have also widened the gulf between the information rich and the information poor. Developing countries of the South attempted to remove the imbalances in the flow of information and improve the coverage of news but the imbalances and distortions in the flow on information has not diminished. The new communication technologies that are beginning to have their impact on economic, social and political process are the focus of this unit. The focus is on some issues that arise from the diffusion of new communication

technologies such as the question of national sovereignty, the imbalances in the flow of information and the distortions in the coverage of news.

23.2 CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Broadly speaking the communication channels that link people around the world can be divided into non technological and technological. Language, tourism, migration and international organisations are some of the non-technological channels of communication. Some of the major technological channels of global communications are print materials, postal services, radio and television broadcasting, telecommunications and computer communications.

The print media has been the most durable communication channel across nations. Ever since the printing press was invented in the 16th Century, the volume of books, newspapers, and periodicals that carry ideas to foreign audiences has increased. In the very recent past, the introduction of new technologies has increased the reach of this media. For a long time, transportation of printed material across national borders depended on transportation media. Today however, print media are less limited by the weight of the paper. Satellites are now distributing images of many newspapers and periodicals to publishing houses and printing plants around the world. Traditional print publishers are adapting or creating materials for new electronic publishing formats and the once 'printed' pages are now being distributed through computers or television sets via telephone lines, TV cables, video discs.

Postal communication began in the latter half of the 19th Century, and has become a near universal medium of global communication. Advances in transport and communication technologies are having an impact on this medium as well. In many countries today and private and public companies are companies are competing for express mail services that can deliver a package to any place in the world in about two days. Electronic mail can now be transmitted for post office to post office, where it is reproduced in original for and them placed into physical mail. Fax machines are fast replacing postal service for personal mail.

Since its inception in the early 20th Century, international **radio broadcasting** has become one of the most significant channels of international communication. About a hundred countries broadcast news, opinion and entertainment to foreign listeners providing a major source of information. Some radio stations like BBC and Voice of America today command huge audiences across the globe.

Satellite telecommunications began in the early 1960s. The first true communication satellite was the Syncom III which broadcast the 1964 Tokyo Olympic games. The following year, INTELSAT, a global consortium was established to serve the global communication needs. Although a number of nations and private firms have launched communication satellites into orbit, INTELSAT system carries about 80 per cent of the world long-distance international telecommunication traffic.

Closely associated with the current digital revolution, the **computer** has emerged in the 1980s as a tool of communication. Today the computer to computer communications is world wide. With the dramatic increase in capacity, speed and reliability and fall in the prices, people are acquiring personal computers and joining international computer networks.

23.3 NEW COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

In the post war period there are two important technical developments that have had a profound impact on the communications. One is the development of communication satellites and the other is the digital revolution. Although the use of communication satellites had begun in the 1960s, it was only in the 1980s that their full potential came to be realised. Combined with the digital telecommunications, satellites have increased the reach of the existing media by enabling the trans-border transfer of data, voice, picture.

Communications based on **satellite technology** became a reality with the dawn of the space era 1957. Although the former Soviet Union was the first to place satellites in

orbit it was the United States that took the lead in utilizing communication satellites for civilian and military purposes. A communication satellite is located about 36,000 km high in the orbit. From this height its beams can cover one third of the earth's surface. A satellite can interconnect any number of stations that lie under its antenna, known as footprint. All the points under its beam are of the same distances from the satellite. Hence we say that the satellite is insensitive to distance. Since the mid-1960, the International Telecommunications Satellite Organisation (INTELSAT), a satellite consortium, has come to dominate the intercontinental telecommunications. Its counterpart in the former socialist countries was the Internationals Organisation of Space Communications INTERSPUTNIK which was founded in 1971.

Other satellite consortiums have also been established to meet the specific requirements. For instances, there is the International Maritime Satellite Organisation founded in 1979 to meet the communication requirements over the seas. There are also regional consortiums to meet the communication requirements of specific regions such as the ARABSAT and ASIAVISION. In addition, several countries have launched their own satellites to meet the domestic telecommunication requirements. In the 1980s, private satellite systems have emerged to break the monopoly of the INTELSAT in satellite services.

Advances in electronics and digital devices are the other developments that have led to a revolution in communications. Basically information can be transmitted over any telecommunications medium in two ways: analog or digital. The analog transmission uses an electrical signal to represent the voice, picture, or data to be sent. When the voice is loud the signal is strong, and when it is soft, the signal is weak. Virtually all the worlds telecommunications channels started as analog devices. Today they are rapidly being replaced by digital technology. In digital communication, the information is translated into discrete binary digits (zeros and ones) known as bits. These bits can be transmitted unambiguously and saved exactly as transmitted. Computers are connected to each other to transfer digital data. Telephone lines that carry analog data are being used to send digital computer data by attaching a modem to the computer to convert analog information into digital. In the modem telephone system, conversations are converted into digital form and transmitted by wire or optical fibre.

The computer is the driving force behind the current digital revolution. Today there is a worldwide trend towards digital devices. As a result there is a drive to create 'integrated digital network' which will eventually merge previously separate communications network into new, high capacity systems that include telephone, telegraph, tele-text, fax, data, and video.

These new communication technologies, principally the satellite and digital networks have revolutionised communications in the recent years. The speed and capacity of communications technologies has outpaced our wildest expectations. As distance and terrain become meaningless in the satellite age and as the digital revolution spurs networking of communication devices, there is no longer a clear demarcation between many national and international networks. These have no doubt profound implications for the international system. In the following section we will examine two issues, national sovereignty and the flow of information, that have a bearing on the international political process. Although these two issues are related they are two distinct issues. On both these issues there are different perception between the advanced nations of the North and the newly emergent developing nations of the South.

23.4 ISSUES IN COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

23.4.1 Communication and National Sovereignty

New communication technologies pose several problems for the concept of sovereignty. Sovereignty traditionally refers to a country's right to protect its borders form military aggression; to preserve its natural wealth and resources; and to choose its political, social, economic and cultural systems without interference by another state. From this conception of sovereignty flows the principle of 'information sovereignty' — that nations enjoy the full rights of sovereignty and territorial integrity in the areas of communication and information. However, the new communication and information technologies of

message production, dissemination and reception do not respect national boundaries. This has given rise to a host of issues that affect national sovereignty-controlling the flow of information, development of national communication facilities etc. Let us examine the issue of sovereignty generated by satellite technology by taking two types of satellites-direct broadcasting satellites and remote sensing satellites.

From their invention in the early 1960s, direct broadcasting satellites have raised the issues of national sovereignty. As already mentioned, a communication satellite placed in the GSO can cover one third of the earth's surface. In other words, whether intended or not, broadcasting signals from satellite spill over in to the territories of other nations. Its footprint (the geographical area covered by the signal) can never be shaped exactly to fit the intended coverage area. In this context some argue that a country should be protected from unwanted signals. Direct television broadcasting by satellites from one country to another without the prior consent of the receiving state is a violation of national sovereignty, a threat to national economies and national cultures. On the other hand, industrialised countries which lead in satellite technologies have argued that any regulation of direct broadcast satellites is a thereat to the freedom of information. This position is strongly advocated by the United States.

Satellite technologies also gave rise to controversies related to the access of slots in outer space. Air space law allow a state to exercise sovereignty over its air space, whereas the prevailing space law doctrines allow countries to explore and use outer space, the moon, and other celestial bodies on a basis of equality without national appropriation by claim of sovereignty. Outer space law and airspace law are thus diametrically opposed both in principle and practice. Moreover, there has no satisfactory solution to the issue of identifying the point at which the airspace ends and outer space begins. The threshold between airspace and outer space is widely held to be the Van Karman line — the point to which states traditionally may claim sovereignty; over the air above their territory. Beyond this line according to this view, state sovereignty ends.

This definition has not been without controversy. Geo-stationary communication satellites are ideally located at a height of 36,000 km over the equator. Countries located nearer to the equator are at a vantage point to receive satellite signals through a relatively thin layer of atmosphere. But the geo-stationary orbit (GSO) is limited by the fact that satellites in his orbit cannot be parked close to each other and there are a growing number of countries and corporations interest in satellite services. In 1976, nine countries located on the equator adopted the Bogota Declaration, which stated that the geo-stationary orbit is a natural resource of the equatorial states and is thereby subject to their sovereignty. These countries insist that no object could be placed in the GSO without their approval. These countries fear that the GSO is limited and may not be available for them by the time they are ready to use it. This position has, however, been disputed by the two leading space faring countries, the United States and the former Soviet Union.

In fact, today there are four major positions on sovereignty over the GSO. The first advocated primarily by the United States, considers that the GSO should be allocated on a "first-come, first-served" basis. A second position, represented by the then Soviet Union, advocates the 'Van Karman principle', that is that there should be a clear demarcation point between outer space and aerospace, set at a specific altitude above sea level. Airspace below that boundary would be sovereign property. Above that limit it would be outer space to which all would have free access. The third approach, defended mainly by the developing countries, calls for global prior allocation of both orbital positions and frequencies. They favour establishing an international regime to guarantee equal access. Finally, we have the equatorial countries view, which also supports the need for prior allocation; but because of their geographical position claim preferential rights.

The question of sovereignty was also raised by another class of satellites — the earth observation or remote sensing satellites. These satellites detect, measure, and analyse substances or objects on earth form orbit. There is little doubt that data gained in this way can increase the political and economic power of the 'sensing' nation over the 'sensed' nation. Knowledge of likely oil-deposits, crop yields or failures, and mineral deposits can help governments and corporations make better plans for the domestic and make more informed bids on the international markets. Since international law grants absolute sovereignty national governments sovereignty over their natural resources, the issue here is whether a nation should have absolute sovereignty over information regarding those resources. To whom does the information belong when America's

LANDSAT, the French SPOT, India's IRS or some another commercial remote sensing satellite detects oil or important mineral deposits in some parts of Asia or Africa? The country whose resources are being sensed is not aware of the existence of these resources or that information. A country or a corporation owing and utilizing the remote-sensing satellite may know more about the country than the country does itself. Data obtained by these method by these methods might provide these countries and private firms with vital economic data which is not available to the local authorities. Some developing countries, such as Brazil have therefore opposed the use of remote sensing techniques or other advanced sensing techniques without prior consent. These countries fears have not been assuaged by a policy of unlimited availability of remote sensing satellite date. These fears have been compounded by the fact that a vast majority of these countries simply do not have the trained personnel to interpret the remotely sensed data even if the data in made available to them.

This debate finally resulted in the United Nations adopting the *Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space* in 1986, the first internationally recognised principles guiding the conduct of remote sensing satellites. By this treaty, sensed nations have given up the demand for prior consent before data dissemination. But the principles guarantee the sensed access to all data. In recent years, the debate on remote sensing satellites has been enlivened by the use of these systems by the international news agencies and commercial networks. Since the inception of the space age, the two leading space powers, the United States and Soviet Union had utilised · satellites based sensing techniques to monitor the movement and deployment of military weapons by each other. They have also been used to verify the compliance of arms control agreements. In the 1980s, the monopoly of highly classified satellites of the governments in monitoring nuclear and missile activities was broken when international news agencies and commercial networks began using remotely sensed data. In the United States, television viewers saw LANDSAT pictures of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster nuclear disaster days before the Soviets acknowledged that the accident had even occurred. ABC news used the LANDSAT images to reveal that Iran had deployed Chinese made 'silkworm' missiles. This is bound to have significant bearing on the future trends in international political processes.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i)   Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Check your answer with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1)   Some of the non technical means of communications are:

(a) .... (b) .... (c) ....

2)   Bogota declaration states that ....

3)   What is the position of different states on the sovereignty over the geo-stationary orbit?

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23.4.2   Disparities in Communication

The communication revolution has not benefited all of human kind equally. There are enormous and ever growing disparities between these who have information and those who lack information. These differences exist within countries and between genders. They exist between cities and the rural side. They exist between the rich countries and the poor countries. In other words, just as there is an economic division between nations, one can identify the division between the information-rich and the information-poor of the world. In fact, information abundance is a reality only for an exclusive club of nations and elite within those nations.

For more than a century, the North Atlantic news agencies divided the world into spheres of influences. Roads, ocean routes, transoceanic cables, telegraph, and radio frequencies followed colonial routes. One of the most persistent criticisms of news flows has been that the leading four transnational news agencies — Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Agence France Press (AFP) and Routers — control the bulk of the news flow. As we saw even today, with satellites, television, fibre optics, and computer communications, much of the information continues to flow along the North Atlantic axis. There is a one way flow of cinema, television programming from the big exporting countries to the rest of the world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), whose main purpose is to promote the cause of peace by increasing understanding among nations through education and research, from its inception in 1945 has focused its attention on the development of communication infrastructure in member states. In the early 1950s the United Nations recognised that "independent domestic information enterprise (in developing countries) should be given facilities and assistance in order at they may be member states. In the early 1950s the United Nations recognised that "independent domestic information enterprise (in developing countries) should be given facilities and assistance in order that they may be enabled to contribute to the spread of information, to the development of national culture and to international understanding". It called for the elaboration of a concrete programme and plan of action in this respect. In the 1960s, UNESCO surveyed communication technologies world wide and concluded that the disparities between the developed and developing countries was widening and that these disparities made free circulation of news and information a one-way flow rather than a real exchange. In the 1970s the developing countries gathered forces to demand a restructuring of the international information order. The Non-Aligned Movement, consisting of nations and liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America and representing over two-thirds of the humanity, spearheaded the demand for a new international information order.

23.4.3 New International Information Order

The demand for a new information order emerged in the context of the debate on the new international economic order. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), seeking to promote the values of equality interdependence, development oriented towards the people rather than capital and technology, harmony with the environment, respect for human rights, and satisfaction of the basic human needs had developed the concept of New International Economic Order (NIEO). In order to correct the imbalances and distortions in the prevailing economic relations between the North and South, the NAM called for better terms of trade with the industrialised nations and more local control over productive assets such as capital, labour, and technology. It also called for greater trade among developing nations, greater investments by the industrialised countries, and greater participation of the developing countries in the world economic institutions. The issue was debated in the United Nations which in 1974 passed the *Declaration of a International Economic Order.*

The demand for a New Information Order was an outgrowth of the values inherent in the NIEO debate. As the non-aligned nations emphasised, one order was meaningless without the other. Communication was an antecedent and engine to economic activity. At the Aligers summit meeting in 1973, the NAM called for the "reorganisation of existing communication channels, which area legacy of the colonial past". Thereafter the demand for a new information order gathered momentum in tandem with the demand for NIEO. The New Delhi Declaration on Decolonisation of Information in 1976 succinctly put forward the case for balanced flow of information thus:

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

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

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

- In a situation in which the means of information are dominate and monopolised by a few, freedom of information really comes to mean the freedom of a few to propagate information in the manner of their choosing and the virtual denial to the rest of the right to inform and be informed objectively and accurately".

Not content with a mere critique, the NAM also launched two concrete efforts aimed at redressing the imbalances in the worlds information flows. In 1975 the Non-aligned News Agencies Pool was initiated to provide news and information not usually found in western news services. In 1977, NAM organised the Broadcasting Organisations of the Non-Aligned Countries to ensure dissemination of broadcast information in and from non-aligned countries.

It was at the Colombo summit meeting that the NAM unequivocally stated for the first time that "a new international order in the fields of information and mass communications is as vital as a new international economic order". It was largely as a result of the NAMs efforts to obtain the Decolonisation of information that in 1978 UNESCO established an International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, popularly known as the MacBride Commission after its chairman Sean MacBride. The commission's report, *Many Voices, One World*, was presented at the . 1980 General Conference. The MacBride commission strongly advocated the establishment of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and especially focused on the democratisation of communication. It called for reducing commercialism in communications and emphasised the media's role in aiding oppressed people to gain grater freedom, independence, access to information, and right to expression. The commission also envisioned an expanded role for UNESCO in implementing these recommendations.

However, the call for a new international information order encountered strong resistance from the Western governments. The press and publishing lobbying groups in these countries opposed the new information order on the premise that would lead to government control. They particularly objected to the article stating that "States are responsible for the activities in the international sphere of all mass media under their jurisdiction". The United was particularly unhappy that UNESCO's programmes limited the influence and participation of private sector in the development of national communications of the developing nations. The United States withdrew from the UNESCO in 1984 saying that its programmes endangered the free flow of information and free market. It claimed that the Soviet threat hung over the future operations of the UNESCO and that freedom of press was in danger. A year later, Britain also withdrew from the UNESCO.

The withdrawal of the US resulted in the information and communication issue being shifted to the back burner at the UNESCO. Despite some sparks of activity, the information debate was largely squashed by the US action. The 1985 General Conference in a conciliatory tone declared that the establishment of a new world information and communication order should be 'seen as *an evolving and continuous process*'. In the following years all important issues of the new information order such as global news, the right to communicate, or national communication policies receded into the background.

23.5 THE PRESENT INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER

A new information order has taken shape but not the one envisaged by the non-aligned nations. It is an order of the advanced countries of the North. While many nations of the South languish in the preelectric age, the developed nations have moved into the post-industrial or **information age**. The primary orientation of their economies is towards service rather than manufacturing activities. The knowledge industry predominates in these economies. These economies are shifting their manufacturing bases to the less developed countries where the cost of labour is relatively cheap. Economies are getting inextricably intertwined. But this interdependence facilitated by the communication technologies masks the growing divide between the North and South which has widened even more. Consider the following:

- Around the world each day, more than 8500 newspapers publish over 575 million copies. The developed countries account for 70 per cent of total newspaper production. Although developing countries, with three quarters of the worlds population own about one-half of the worlds daily newspapers, they can manage only 30 per cent of the worlds newspaper output. On over 60 countries, there are no general interest newspapers or only a single newspaper is published.

- Book production has increased dramatically around the world. But more books are published [over six lakhs] and exported by the developed countries than by the developing countries [over two lakhs]. The increasing demand for scientific, technical, and educational books and the shortage of printing paper requires most developing countries to import increasing quantities of books from the countries of the West. However, the flow of books from the developing countries to the developed world remains slight. Essentially, the flow of books between the two groups is a one-way flow of books between the two groups is a one-way flow, with increasing concentration of the publishing industry in a few multinational corporations. The United States, Great Britain and Germany are among the largest exporters of books.

- In the production of cinematic films, developing countries produce a little more than the developed countries. India leads the world in the production of films. But United States while not the largest producer is the largest exporter. Along with France, Great Britain and Germany, it accounts for 80 to 90 per cent of all exported films.

- There are disparities in the distribution of radio and television receivers. The number of receiver per 1000 inhabitants in the developed world was 1,006 and 485 in 1988 while in the developing countries it was 173 and 44. These statistic do not reflect the fact that hundreds of radio transmitters in the third world are actually repeaters for signals originating in the developed world or the heavy dependence imported television programming, primarily from United States, or to a much lesser extent, Europe and Japan.

- Today there are nearly 200 communications satellites in the geo-synchronous orbit. Of these, over 90 per cent are launched by the developed countries. The United States and the Commonwealth of Independent States, have the largest satellite networks, including domestic civilian and world wide military communication network. With only 15 per cent of the worlds population, they use more than 50 per cent of the geo-stationary orbit.

- By the end of the 1980s, the number of telephone lines in service in the developed countries was 350 million, as compared to 60 million in the developing world. Ten developed countries, with 20 per cent of the worlds population, accounted for almost three quarters of all telephone lines. The United States had as many telephone lines as all of Asia. More important, the telephone technology in the developing countries is still primitive and expensive when compared with the developed countries.

- Over 90 per cent of the worlds computers are found in 15 of the world most economically advanced countries. International computer communications is available in more than one hundred countries. But it requires three basic preconditions: a reliable universal electrical supply, noise-free and interference-free telephone lines, and reliable maintenance services. All these are lacking in most parts of the world.

In the 1980s nations of the South experience many improvements in communications, but the disparity between the North and the South continued to grow. Although some progress has been made in making developing countries concerns heard, the current flow of information is more unbalanced today than it was ever before, Further although some transactional mass media have improved their coverage of the South, images of these countries are still distorted.

Market and commercial forces have been the main driving forces behind the current technological developments in the area of communications and information. In the 1970s, commercial interests played an important role in the weakening of institutional and governmental controls in the United States. In the 1980s many European nations have deregulated their communication and information sectors allowing greater

participation of the private sector in information production and dissemination. These market forces have their own political power and in many countries complement government policies that view electronic information industries as vital to the nations economic well being. As we noted earlier, these forces have played an important role in scuttling the development of a new information order as envisaged by the developing countries. With the national economies getting intertwined and with the emergence of world-wide communication and information networks, today there are greater pressures on the developing nations to deregulate their economies and information sectors.

Partly as a result of the growing communication among and between people around the world, and partly because of the market forces another ominous development is taking place — the increasing concentration and trans-nationalisation of media. A handful of huge conglomerates have begun to dominate the world's flow of information and communication. If the present trends continue by the end of the present century less than a dozen corporate giants are expected to control most of the world's important newspapers, magazines, books, broadcast stations, movies, recordings and videocassettes. These corporate giants exert a homogenising influence over ideas, culture, and commerce. This threatens the right to information to the extent that there will be no diverse sources to choose from and further there will be limited access for those citizens who wish to reach others.

23.5.1 Impact of Communication Technologies on International Politics

The impact of communication revolution heralded by communication satellites, digital and computer systems on international politics are just beginning to be felt. While predicting the exact impact of the new communication technologies is tricky, one thing is sure. The familiar ground is rapidly shifting. Almost all societies have become porous. Due to the convergence of key technologies, national governments are losing control over their national communications. Satellites make nonsense of traditional geography and notions of distance; cable multiplies the local delivery systems and sucks in distant signals; and computers process and transfer information to each other. As nations loose control over message production, dissemination, and reception, as a result of the transnational character of the communication technologies and processes, nations are faced with new threats — vulnerability to disruption and technical failures.

A new kind of global community is emerging with non-state actors such as transnational corporations and non-governmental organisations (NGO's) playing an important role. Communication revolution had played an important role in the rise of these actors into prominence. Previously isolated from one another, NGO's are becoming global actors, with the increase in their power and capacity to communicate. Playing a prominent role at the United Nations and other world forums, NGO's and citizen advocacy groups are taking up issues like environment protection, disarmament, human rights, consumer rights etc. issues and problems whose scale confounds local and national solutions. There is some evidence to suggest the emergence of a fledging global civil society, that is part of our collective lives that is neither market nor government but is so often inundated by them.

Communication technologies are also facilitating the emergence of a world public opinion, another evidence of the emergence of global civil society. World opinion has formed around two types of problems; widespread national problems, such as underdevelopment, hunger, social inequalities, and the energy crisis; and problems that are global in scope, such as development, environment, disarmament, and human rights. Political leaders are increasingly paying attention not only to the traditional home and human rights. Political leaders are increasingly paying attention not only to the traditional home and foreign public opinion but the opinion expressed by the world at large. In the pre electronic ages, political leaders believed they could control home and foreign public opinion. The news media rarely quoted from editorial or opinion pieces that appear abroad. But today improved communication technologies, together with sophisticated sampling techniques, now make it possible for governments and the news media to know precisely what foreign publics think. Governments often tailor their actions to foreign publics as well as their own.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

    ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the position of the Non-aligned states on the flow of information?

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2) The main recommendations of the MacBride Commission are:

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3) What promoted the United States to withdraw from UNESCO?

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23.6 LET US SUM UP

As result of convergence of several technologies, we are amidst dramatic developments in communication and information fields. As we saw, the principal technologies here are communication and remote sensing satellites and the digital systems. Unfortunately the communication technologies have not benefited all the human kind equally. There are enormous and ever growing disparities between those who have information and those who lack information. These differences exist within and between countries.

Since the mid 1970s, developing nations have been seeking to create a international communication order that is more balanced, decolonised and democratic. They have faced strong opposition from commercial interests and from those nations who want to retain their control over the global economic and information orders.

The impact of these technologies on international politics is just beginning to be felt. As we saw national sovereignty is threatened by communication technologies which make geographical distances meaningless. There is a global civil society in the making as a result of the world wide communication revolution. The present international communication and information order is promoting interdependence between nations and contributing to cultural homogenisation or synchronisation of the world. But it is also legitimising the existing economic disparities between and within nations.

23.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Govind Narain Srivastava (1989), *NAM and the New International Information and Communication Order*, Indian Institute of Non-aligned Studies, New Delhi.

Howard H Fredrick (1993), *Global Communication and International Relations*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, California.

Simon Serfaty (ed) (1990), *The Media and Foreign Policy*, St. Martin Press, New York.

Hamid Mowlana (1986), *Global Information and World Communication*; New Frontiers International Relations, Longmans, London.

23.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) Language, tourism, international organisations are some of the non technological channels of communication.

2) A declaration adopted by nine countries located on the equator in 1976 stating that the geo-stationary orbit is a natural resource of the equatorial states and is thereby subject to their sovereignty. These countries insist that no object could be placed in the GSO without their approval.

3) See section 23.4.1

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Section 23.4.2

2) The MacBride commission strongly advocated the establishment of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and especially focused on the democratisation of communication. Some of the important recommendations are that:

    1) Developing countries must take measures to establish or develop the essential elements of their communications systems,

    2) Networks should be established to increase new flows,

    3) National production of broadcasting materials should be encouraged to help overcome dependence on external sources,

    4) Communication components in all development projects should receive adequate financing.

    5) The electromagnetic spectrum and geo-stationary orbit should be more equitably shared as the common property of mankind,

    6) Special attention should be devoted to obstacles and restriction that derive from the concentration of media ownership,

    7) Effective legal measures should be designed to limit the process of concentration and monopolisation,

    8) Conditions for the preservation on the cultural identity of every society should be created.

See section 23.4.2