

Chapter 22

Trade and Information Policy

Sandra Braman

As society is transformed by the use of new technologies, information policy issues cross traditional boundaries to be found in a wide range of decision-making arenas. The New World Information Order (NWIO) debate lies relatively quiescent in Unesco, but surfaces in international trade negotiations in response to the US push to get trade in services, or international information flows, included under the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), a set of international trade agreements designed to deal with goods. The US move of the 1980s to extend the GATT to 'trade' in information has met great resistance from both developed and developing nations.¹

From the beginning, proponents of a New World Information Order have referred to transborder data flows (TBDF) and a range of other types of international information flows in addition to news (Cruise O'Brien, 1980, 1983; Hamelink, 1979; Richstad and Anderson, 1981). Developing countries were in this sense ahead of the developed world in understanding that the key to distribution of the world's resources lay within the international information system.

The Uruguay Round of GATT talks is one venue in which the geopolitical shift of the late twentieth century away from a Cold War configuration towards a new bloc system is being crafted (Cline, 1983). The fact that these talks deal with international information flows during a period of such global structural change is in itself interesting, for those flows have a cybernetic effect on the nature of that change. Not only do the new telecommunications services make pos-

sible instantaneous and massive global information flows which have enabled the development of transnational corporations (TNCs) (Antonelli, 1981, 1984) and other new organizational forms; these flows also feed back information to be used in future rounds of decision-making, thus further shaping the mutating environment.

NWIO-type issues may well reach their denouement in trade negotiations. The dominance of the trade arena at a time when the nature of the international information policy regime² is just being established means that trade operational definitions, modes of argument and value hierarchies are likely to influence the information policy regime as well.

This discussion of the debate over trade in services in the GATT will explore the information policy dimensions of current trade issues of major geopolitical importance. Opening with background on the GATT and the trade in services issue, it continues through the problems of economic analysis that underlie trade treatment of information and an exploration of the range of policy options available, and concludes with recommendations regarding strategies for those promoting NWIO-type concerns.

Trade in Services and the GATT Agreements

History of the GATT and developing nations
The GATT agreements were created after the Second World War as part of the global reorgan-

ization which also involved international monetary and fiscal arrangements. They grew out of US/United Kingdom talks begun in 1941 and represented the first systematic attempt to deliberately structure a global economic environment.

The fundamental principle behind the provisions of the GATT is equal treatment for every nation. This seemingly democratic notion unfortunately works to the disadvantage of developing nations which need special treatment in order to survive and thrive. The theoretical force driving the agreements comes from classical trade theory as developed during the mid-nineteenth century by Ricardo and others. At that time the global economy was seen as ever-expanding and capable of providing prosperity for all according to two principles: (1) each nation has a comparative advantage, or specific economic niche within the world system, determined by its resources ('factor endowments'); and (2) national and global prosperity will emerge only when each country specializes in its area of comparative advantage and trades the resulting goods internationally. It is not coincidental that this economic theory provided a nice justification for imperial practices in the political realm.

The GATT – now a collection of over 100 multilateral and bilateral agreements signed by 96 nations – was originally created for temporary usage while the more subtle and complex Havana Charter, which included features sensitive to development issues, was discussed. After three years of debate about the Havana Charter and the related proposed International Trade Organization, in 1950 the US killed the plan and with it, in Spero's words, 'The potential integration of the concerns of less developed countries in the regulation of international trade...' (1981: 184).

Though developing countries had aired hundreds of proposals, ranging from a direct transfer of resources to flexibility in the assignment of legal responsibilities in order to meet their special needs, none were incorporated into the final agreements (Hudec, 1975, 1987). Nor did the realities of GATT implementation favor development needs. Basic provisions institutionalized arrangements that ignored significant differences among countries. The most favored nation principle eliminated the possibility of preferential trading arrangements, and the GATT rule of reciprocity was problematic for Southern coun-

tries with little to offer in exchange for concessions in their favor. Thus from the moment the trade regime was established, the concerns of developing countries were left out of the decision-making calculus. The elite-oriented power structure of GATT decision-making, revolving around a Secretariat composed of representatives from leading developed nations, similarly blocked developing countries from effective participation in decision-making processes (GATT, 1979, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1986d, 1987a, 1987b, 1988a, 1988b).

The provisions of the GATT were challenged by developing countries from the start. Receptiveness seemed to increase in response to Soviet threats to form an alternative international trade organization oriented to Third World needs (Roeder, 1985), and to a rise in the price of oil (Bergen, 1987). Humanitarian motives, such as helping nations in need – what Ruggie (1982) calls the 'embedded liberalism' of the post-war trade regime – seem to have gained and lost force to match the power of the energy cartel. Actual development-oriented provisions of the GATT, such as those of the Tokyo Round of the 1970s, were viewed by developing nations as outmoded and/or insufficient (Cline et al., 1978; Preeg, 1973).

Frustration with the impact of existing trade rules on developing nations led to activity outside the GATT as well. Beginning in the early 1950s, Unesco began compiling lists of trade barriers to the international flow of information (see, for example, Unesco, 1955). The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was finally formed specifically to further the trade interests of developing nations. UNCTAD has provided a forum for discussion of trade issues of concern to developing countries and encouraged research on trade in services in the Third World, but has been frustrated in its international effectiveness because of the difficulty of reaching the consensus among developing countries needed to establish unified positions (Cutajar, 1985; UNCTAD, 1984).

In the 1980s, developing nations continued to question the ability of the GATT to meet their needs in a time of transformation of the global economy (Damon, 1986; Lowenfeld, 1986). Traditional trade sanctions are still used despite research that shows their effects to be more symbolic than actual (Lindsay, 1986; Odell,

1985), and the use of non-tariff trade sanctions, made easier by the shift to an information economy, is increasing. Bilateral trade agreements, such as the US-Canada Free Trade Agreement, are on the rise, and many in both the developed and developing worlds are questioning the continued viability of multilateral fora such as the GATT (Destler, 1986; Roach, 1987; Schwab, 1987).

Trade in services in the GATT

The word 'services' is among many in the current trade environment with a myriad meanings (Bravender-Coyle, 1985; Bruce, 1985; Bruce et al., 1986). The 1983-4 national studies on trade in services generated in response to an agreement at the 1982 GATT Ministerial Meeting simply listed what industries each country included, demonstrating wide variations (see, for example, the submissions of Canada, the EEC, the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, and Sweden to the GATT). Services mentioned are as diverse as tourism, insurance, advertising, accounting and data processing. Most mass media activities, including news collection and distribution, are subsumed under other categories and have received shockingly little direct attention.

While not all of the services being discussed involve international information flows, Nusbaumer (1987) lists the International Standard Industrial Code (ISIC) numbers for those that do: financial services (81); business services, including advertising (8325), legal (8321) and accounting (8322) services; data processing and communication services (8323, 7200); recreational and cultural services (94), including motion picture production, distribution and projection (9411, 9412) and radio and television broadcasting (9413); domestic and personal services, like photography (9592); sanitary and social and related community services, including education (8130) and research and scientific institutes.

Cass and Noam, influential participants in the US regulatory process, define services as 'commercial activities that do not result in production of tangible goods' (1989: 4), but the definition offered by *The Economist* seems to be the most popular: 'Services are anything that can be bought and sold but cannot be dropped on your foot' (*The Economist*, 1985: 20).

Services can be final products, such as television programming or an advertising campaign. They can also be intermediate inputs in the production of other goods or services, as in automated control of a manufacturing line or flows of transaction data. The distinction is significant for policy-making, for while the former are most often interorganizational, the latter are generally intra-organizational and thus less accessible to decision-making in the public sector despite their enormous impact.

The US effort to develop trade rules to govern services began in 1974 when it established a services advisory committee as part of the Trade Act of that year (Rivers et al., 1987). Increasingly over the next few years services were mentioned in provisions of both bilateral and multilateral agreements, as information creation, processing, flows and use continued to rise in importance to the US economy (Bauer et al., 1963; Candilis, 1988; Cohen, 1981).

In 1982 the US forced trade in services onto the agenda of the GATT, using access to the US market and a threat to withdraw from the GATT as prods. Resistance to discussion in the area, however, contributed to the delay of the opening of the Uruguay Round by at least two years (Brazil, 1988; Shelp, 1987). Dozens of meetings on the subject between the ultimate opening of the Uruguay Round and the 1988 mid-term meeting yielded nothing but long lists of fundamental differences.

Services achieved equal status with goods in US law with the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988, a major overhaul of trade legislation justified by reference to a new global economic system developed over the last decade and characterized by integration between trade, technological development, investment and services. It is the position of the US that extension of trade law to services is the logical and inevitable response to these shifts (Feketekuty, 1986; Feketekuty and Aronson, 1984; Feketekuty and Hausar, 1985). A more cynical view, shared by the developing countries (Atinc et al., 1984), points to the US budget deficit, balance of trade and potential for comparative advantage in many of the services industries. The GATT effort is certainly part of the overall US attempt to find a new equilibrium in a period of structural change in the global economy that includes a decline in its hegemonic position.

Sides in the debate over inclusion of trade in services under the GATT agreements have not broken down cleanly along developed/developing country lines. The countries of Western Europe for several years rejected the US initiative, based both on the kinds of defensive concerns expressed so effectively in the Nora/Minc report, and on a growing sensitivity to specific cultural concerns of their own (Becker, 1986, 1988a; Hamelink, 1979, 1983, 1984). While by the 1980s the EEC had expressed its intention to compete internationally in the services area and begun to shape policy that would lead it in that direction (Engel, 1989; Noam, 1986), alternatives to the GATT were also being considered. Many of the developing countries that have achieved NIC status did so through a shift of their economies to services.

Whether or not creating a trade regime for services serves anyone's self-interest, it has become necessary to develop some kind of international regime governing international flows of information of all kinds. Legal problems in this area have been the subject of discussion for at least two decades. These problems derive from two sources: (1) new types of activities, relationships and corporate structures made possible by technological development have generated their own, also in many cases new, legal issues; and (2) within every jurisdiction, clashes among concurrently applicable legal systems – a situation which has resulted from the convergence of technologies and therefore of legal systems developed to deal with each – generate additional legal difficulties.

Treatment of services as trade under the GATT is one extreme of a range of possible types of regimes to govern international information flows. Alternatives include creation of different trade-type arrangements, institutions outside the trade arena altogether, and the New World Information Order. Individual country commitments to attempt to maintain or initiate delinkage represent another extreme, but offer less in the way of suggestions for comprehensive global arrangements.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the trade in services issue is still open. International working groups are exploring exactly what the GATT rules would mean if applied to specific services, sector by sector. The agreement to conduct these studies before discussing general principles, and to do so on a sectoral basis, were seen as victories

for those countries that oppose the inclusion of trade in services under the GATT agreements.

Arrangements in sectors such as financial services and insurance will have structural effects on communications activities. Delivery of such services so dominates the international telecommunications network that 'users' within telecommunications policy circles are considered to be entities such as Citibank and American Express rather than either individuals or the public in general. Decisions made to serve corporate interests determine the technological and legal environment in which the media and other cultural forces operate.

Those who oppose inclusion of trade in services under the GATT agreements from both developed and developing worlds do so based on a variety of theoretical positions. For some, dependency theory, with its emphasis on cultural as well as economic and political imperialism, is the engine. Others find their objections in traditional economic theory, but feel their countries are poorly positioned in the information economy as envisioned under US-proposed trade rules. Arguments in both cases focus on interrelationships among international information flows, the distribution of resources and decision-making control in the global economy, and the ability of social groups to exercise self-determination.

Those who support inclusion of trade in services under the GATT – and support also can be found in the developing world as well as the developed – depend upon notions of rationalization and harmonization of the global economy (Ochel and Wegner, 1987; Petersmann and Hilf, 1988; Rubin and Jones, 1989). From this perspective, notions of comparative advantage and the international division of labor are not only sensible but need to be extended.

While in some ways this split replays the NWIO debate in Unesco, in other ways the particularities of trade offer unique modes of action and opportunities for those who represent NWIO-type concerns.

Problems in Economic Analysis

Though Easterbrook argues that the shift of the study of communication to the center of analysis of economic history is a 'pronounced shift in

vantage point', (1960: 559) and the post-Second World War period has seen a proliferation of studies dealing with the economics of information, a number of problems remain with the attempt to analyze information in economic terms that present genuine difficulties when dealing with services for the purposes of trade.

- 1 How are individual units of information to be identified? Information most often comes 'bundled', as part of a stream of messages or a compilation; by virtue of having been edited, synthesized, analyzed, organized, patterned, indexed or referenced; or because it is inextricably linked to some physical good. Because bits of information acquire value from their context, it is difficult to define or price individual units.
- 2 How can an economic value be placed on information when both utility and exchange value mutate over time? For many kinds of information, timeliness is crucial to value, which as a consequence can vary rapidly and dramatically over time depending on the type of information and the circumstance.
- 3 How is an economic value to be placed on information when both utility and exchange value vary according to the interests of the buyer? Information that is valuable to the news reporter or stock market participant may be useless to the welfare mother, novelist or geologist, and vice versa. How can such complex and variable functions be understood sufficiently to be described algorithmically and inserted into economists' quantitative models and calculations?
- 4 How is an economic value to be placed on information when it is seemingly impossible to control its shared ownership among increasing numbers of people, what Cleveland (1985) calls its 'leakiness'?
- 5 When is a flow of information across a border 'trade'? The question of how to identify trade in services is key (Sauvant, 1985, 1986). It is generally accepted that there are four ways trade in services *can* occur: (a) by resident activities across national borders to non-resident entities abroad; (b) through contractual relationships such as licensing, partnerships, sale of intellectual property, etc.; (c) within national boundaries to non-residents; and (d) through foreign affiliates.

Because many services are delivered via the international telecommunications network, issues of control over, ownership of and standards for that network intertwine with questions about services either produced or delivered via that network. Globalization of corporate activities confounds the attempt to identify specific geographic poles between which trade can be said to occur. Foreign direct investment (FDI) is sometimes considered trade, and sometimes not (UNCTC, 1989); Petit (1986) distinguishes between 'real' and 'fictional' trade along these lines.

- 6 How is the complexity of the information environment to be handled quantitatively? Ciotti-Revilla and Merritt criticize most NWIO-related discussions for ignoring the multi-actor, multi-component nature of the situation. They note, "The sheer order of magnitude . . . of these large and complicated networks is a much-neglected aspect of the NWIO debate. The number of communication channels in the existing international system is in fact so large that it yields some of the largest numbers thus far encountered in the social universe' (1982: 243).
- 7 How is information labor to be valued? Caporaso wrote in 1986 that 'modern interpretations of the international division of labor are extremely confused', (1986: 1) and then went on to offer a definition of labor that for the first time doesn't *exclude* services: 'activity of a physical or mental sort intended to produce wealth' (1986: 5). Concepts used in the valuation of labor will have to come to terms with the importance of creativity and ideas in an information economy, yet most labor theorists who to date have dealt with the impacts of technological change have largely focused on the loss of employment or geographic relocation (Goldthorpe, 1982; Labovitz and Gibbs, 1964; Noyelle and Stanback, 1984; Perrolle, 1983; Shaiken, 1986; Urry, 1987). There are exceptions; Goldhaber (1983) suggests new labor classes may be forming, while Nusbaum (1987) suggests qualitative measures will come into play under new theories of labor value that will be part of a general shift in economic paradigm forced by the need to understand trade in services.

- 8 How should the types of value that inhere in services but not in goods be treated? Again, the power of ideas is difficult to quantify, and there are other services-specific values, such as mobility, the efficiency gain from performance of a given activity at a particular site rather than another. The cultural, political, social, aesthetic and religious value of information flows are also irreducible to quantitative economic measures of the type used for boots and belt buckles.

Cass and Noam (1989) attempt to resolve these difficulties by denying any fundamental difference between information and physical goods. While this is certainly utilitarian from the regulators' point of view, the arguments depend largely upon assertion and refusal to acknowledge the existence of any non-commodity values. Gibbs and Mashayekhi responded to earlier such attempts by saying: 'Certain scholars have strained both their imaginations and credibility in this context...' (1988: 82).

Traditional trade theory is under attack for failing to take into account international structural change as well as gross differences among nations in terms of market and political power. A computerized analysis of alternative theories (Dixon, 1985) found that world system theory is a better predictor of actual trade concentration. Another simulation compared a moderate version of an alternative trade theory emphasizing concessionary tariffs popular among some developing countries with the more radical alternative of delinking. This study found the development objectives of the two approaches incompatible: partial delinking seems to reinforce the existing division of labor while greater engagement seems to lead to changes in the division of labor. The benefits to the South under either scenario are not equally distributed, and policies which benefit the South under either scenario have costs for the North (Pollins, 1985; Trimmer, 1979).

The Conjunction: Trade and Information Policy

Different decision-making arenas that deal with the same subject matter are distinguishable by their modes of argument, value hierarchies and

operational definitions. The specific configurations of the GATT in these areas both determine the receptivity of trade negotiators to NWIO-type concerns and outline a political space in which there is room for maneuvering in response to the trade in services gesture.

Modes of argument: technical and rhetorical

The trade arena is undergoing debate over the technical nature of its discourse, and is engaged in modes of argument rhetorically dominated by the notion of 'free flow'. Both will be discussed here.

Technical modes of argument. The field of communication policy in general is one in which discussion of negotiation patterns is on the rise. Several have examined this issue as it regards trade in services (Barton, 1986; Bhagwati and Ruggie, 1984; Cline, 1983), some even suggesting specific strategies (Gray, 1983; Noyelle and Dutka, 1986; US, 1988). This interest is raised by decreasing US effectiveness in international negotiations which reflect the combination of its declining hegemonic position and the build-up of resentment against the United States for consistent self-absorption in its policy-making in this area in the past.

The examination of negotiation techniques is also related to a questioning of the nature of regulation in general that cuts across policy issue areas. The nature, effects and utility of the regulatory process as well as of specific techniques are coming into question by traditional policy analysts (Harter and Eads, 1985; Knieps and Spiller, 1983; Pekelis, 1968; Schwartz, 1977; Stewart, 1983), while the critical legal studies movement presents a challenge on more philosophical grounds.

The intrusion of both of these questions – how to negotiate, and the nature of regulation – into the trade arenas offer political opportunities. Examination of the negotiation procedures and approaches opens the possibility of creating a decision-making process in which a wider range of players may effectively be involved and a greater range of values, including non-commodity values, incorporated. The range of potential alternatives to existing GATT arrangements is widened. Not only are alternative organizational settings made possible; there is also room for development of new regulatory

techniques. This is a moment in which aggressive theoretical and conceptual work may find a receptive audience.

Rhetorical modes of argument: 'free flow'. 'Free flow' is a powerful rhetorical formation capable of great shifts in meaning. Its role as a metaphorical hinge linking information flows and trade in physical goods – as well as reactions to its use as a policy-making argument – derive from the histories of its use in both trade and information policy.

The nineteenth century saw 'free trade' as a key feature of colonial empires. The latter third of that century also saw the 'free flow' of information, ironically, entering international discourse with an NIWO-type complaint by the US, which felt maligned by biased news reports that showed a US dominated by racism, bizarre crimes and Indian wars. This early charge of what has come to be called 'coups and earthquakes' reporting stemmed from the complaint that the US had been dealt out of a European cartel of international news agencies formed shortly after the invention of the telegraph (Blanchard, 1986).

In the twentieth century, Wilsonian internationalism gave another spur to free flow that served both the rhetoric of free speech and the interests of big business. Attribution of the Depression to the protectionism of the 1920s offered another set of motivations for free trade (Bronze, 1961; Goldstein, 1988; Gowa, 1988; Haggard, 1988; Hauser, 1986).

Following the Second World War, the US promoted the free flow of information on the one hand, and an international trade regime based on the free flow of goods on the other. In both arenas, 'freedom' was meant to apply in the same ways to nation-states around the world, irrespective of their cultures, socio-economic conditions, or position within the world system. And in both arenas, developing countries found this type of freedom to their disadvantage. Socio-economic conditions of most Third World countries declined under the GATT's free trade provisions; the use of new information technologies appears to have aggravated the situation. At the same time, the international distribution of information seemed biased against developing countries, who found themselves inaccurately portrayed, unable to protect their own information resources, and unable to access the information needed to negotiate internationally.

The rhetoric of free flow currently being used to justify inclusion of trade in services under the GATT agreements thus carries a lot of baggage. It is clear that the phrase can be used to describe a wide range of policies with varying degrees of actual openness, and that many of those policies have acted to the disadvantage of the developing countries. There is fear that joining the notions of free flow of goods and of information may multiply the damaging consequences (Hepworth and Robins, 1988). As a consequence, use of this phrase is backfiring on those who assumed it would have persuasive, and therefore political, value in achieving their economic goals.

The notion of a free and balanced flow is difficult to establish as an alternative without an infrastructure that makes such a flow possible. Thus any agreement of this kind must entail a commitment on the part of developed nations, via international organizations or on their own, to assist in the development of the information infrastructure of developing countries. This in fact has been the foreign aid thrust of the Japanese for several years.

Operational definition: information as commodity

In order for information to be tradable, it must be conceived of as a commodity. While Wuthnow (1987) argues that international flows of science information were commodities critical to the world-economy as early as the seventeenth century in Europe, clearly over the last hundred years more and more types of information have come to be commoditized.

The idea that information should be seen as a commodity, however, competes with other definitional approaches (Braman, 1989; Carey, 1988; Machlup and Mansfield, 1983; Peters, 1988). For many, the value of information is political, social, religious, cultural or aesthetic, and economic valuations are at best irrelevant and at worst sacrilege. Cochran (1960), Eisenstadt (1980) and other historians have shown how differences in such matters yield differences in social, political and economic organization.

The suggestion that international information flows can and should be treated in exactly the same way as trade in tables and chairs offends many as the ultimate stage in a commoditization process that has been resisted all along the way,

and objections to which are profound. On the other hand, societies that are comfortable with commoditization as a – or the – dominant feature of the landscape find the process logical. For those to whom extension of the international division of labor and accumulation of capital are reasonably the dominant goals, the harmonization of accounting, communication and legal systems that would result from the inclusion of trade in services under the GATT agreements is simply an efficient means of getting on with things (Hurwitz, 1983; Roth, 1989). The focus on information as a commodity by the US is part of an overall rejection of cultural, social or political valuation of international information flows that is embedded in background studies for policy-makers, congressional hearings and policy statements in a quite self-conscious way.

The trade arena differs from Unesco and other places where NWIO-type issues have been discussed by this operational definition of information. Use of an operational definition of information as a commodity makes the trade arena much less receptive to NWIO-type concerns, for the discourse itself denies the existence or importance of values represented by those who promote a New World Information Order.

Value hierarchies: the constitutional debate

On one level, the debate over trade in services is a conflict between values, with cultural, social or political concerns on the one hand and economic goals such as efficiency and profit on the other. On another level, the debate is about how to rank value hierarchies themselves. The discourse among nation-states as to which value hierarchies should dominate internationally, and how deviant systems may be accommodated, is responded to in the GATT context by the suggestion that the locus of constitutional responsibility be moved from the nation-state to the international level. This suggestion first arose during the post-Second World War talks, and has gained in power since. The theoretical environment surrounding the Uruguay Round has been filled with talk of the constitutional role to be played by trade agreements.

The argument starts by defining the constitutional act not as the positive act of constituting a community, but as the negative act of protecting against dangers (Cass, 1987). From this per-

spective, the dangers of the 1990s come from the international trade environment, and so agreements that protect against those dangers are constitutional in nature. Other arguments include the efficiency of an international constitution, and the utility of such laws when maneuvering domestically (Hauser, 1986; Hills, 1988). For Simon and Waller (1986), economic sovereignty via international agreements is a way of resolving extra-territorial jurisdictional disputes. Jackson (1984, 1988) emphasizes the interactions between constitutional activities at the national and international levels.

The suggestion that the locus of constitutional power should be removed from the nation-state level to the international both reflects and stimulates a weakening of the nation-state and increased interdependence among nation-states and between them and the international system (Gasiorowski, 1985; Krasner, 1976; Krommenacker, 1986). What the US calls 'harmonization', others term the extra-territorial exercise of power. Inclusion of trade in services under the GATT would accelerate the shift of power from the national to the international level, while making it easier for US-based legal and regulatory approaches to extend their reach internationally.

While this interdependence, Bruce (1983) argues, heightens the responsibility as well as widening the opportunities of domestic policy-makers, it makes developing countries nervous. Already feeling their sovereignty under attack as a result of a variety of types of economic, political and cultural dependency, this aspect of the trade negotiations generates yet another reason to oppose inclusion of trade in services under the GATT agreements. Mosco calls the US-Canada Free Trade Agreement, the declared model for the GATT, the 'first constitution to guarantee that the fundamental rights of multinational business to pursue commerce and set social and public policy take precedence over the political rights of national citizens and their national governments' (1990).

Policy options

There is a range of options available to every country as it decides how to position itself generally within the international economy and, more specifically, where it stands on the

question of including trade in services under the GATT or other trade agreements. Concerns about possible negative effects can be found within every nation, including the US, which has for years suffered from a lack of diversity in program content compared to what is available to television viewers in other nations for whom US programming is only one, instead of the, source. Each country's choices will depend upon cultural inclinations, level of education of the leadership, level of education of the population, existing information infrastructure, investment relationships and current position *vis-à-vis* the global information production chain³ and the international division of labor.

The range of policy options

The key question is how a society balances its desired integration into the global economy against cultural, political and social concerns. For most nations, information policy is an aspect of, or tightly related to, industrial and economic planning (Neu et al., 1987). Nations that value successful trade relationships above all will be inclined to go along with the desires of the heaviest players, and so support the notion of including trade in services under the GATT agreements, or under whatever other trade agreements their major trading partners desire. Strategies for developed nations that seek a position of strength within the information economy will concentrate on staking out a niche and defending it from others; the high definition television (HDTV) debate is an example of a niche – production of broadband receivers – over which several nations are battling.

Developing nations that desire to integrate as completely as possible have a couple of choices. They can seek similarly to establish their own niche, as in the case of Cyprus and several of the group of NICs. They can alternatively focus on making themselves irreplaceably necessary to a stable, sizable and prosperous trading partner or partners, and be willing to do so irrespective of the social, cultural or political costs entailed. The data processing support offered by Korea and several Caribbean nations to the US are examples of this approach (Walsham, 1979; Yoffie, 1983). If, however, O'Donnell (1980) is correct that the later a state forms, the more important the state apparatus is to economic growth, there may be a con-

tradition in following this policy in the realm of services, with its consequent state-weakening effects. It is clear that relationships with transnational corporations have different effects depending upon a state's location within the world system (Evans, 1985; Hveem, 1987; Mexico, 1988).

At the other extreme, the concept of complete delinkage from the international economy as the best solution for developing countries that seek to break their dependent relationships still holds power. Brazil, which has had a national information policy since the 1960s, is an example of a country which has attempted delinkage via self-sufficiency in its information economy; reports on the progress of this policy range from calling it a complete success, to attributing that success to support from a black market in information technologies, to claims that Brazil is two or three generations behind the rest of the world in its information industries. In general, attempts at delinkage have left nations or regions further behind according to economic criteria without providing the kind of sustenance on cultural and social grounds that would be needed to justify the cost. Becker (1988b) argues that the problem with dissociative strategies is not knowing when to start them, but in knowing when to stop. It is one of the consequences of the development of new information technologies that not even those nations that desire to do so can completely separate themselves from the global information economy, for at the very least the transistor radio and videocassettes have made their way everywhere.

Refusal to participate in GATT discussions over the legal treatment of the international flow of services has a disadvantage in that it cuts alternative voices out of the discussion altogether, ensuring that the needs of developing nations and others concerned with the cultural, social and political value of information will not be taken into account in determining the most significant body of rules governing international information flows. While this presence is not now strong, it is argued that things are better than they would have been without pressure from developing countries within the GATT system. The disadvantages of protectionism are also pointed out on theoretical grounds by traditional economists (Hauser, 1986).

There is a variety of positions in between the two extremes of complete acceptance or com-

plete withdrawal. Ideally, a nation would seek some level of integration into the international information economy, but would find a way and level of doing so that would be culturally comfortable and permit sustained attention to other values deemed important. Some argue that such integration is critical to the future of developing nations (Bascur, 1985; Ewing, 1985). Within the trade in services discussion, both developed and developing nations which take such an intermediary position have supported research by nation and by sector (Patterson, 1986). These nations represent the majority of those involved in the discussion, for few nations even of Western Europe are comfortable with the degree to which the US seeks harmonization of communication, legal, accounting and financial systems. In addition to participating in global discussions, the EEC is developing its own, regional approach to trade in services.

One problem in decision-making is the paucity of information available about service industries; the situation is even worse for developing nations than for the developed. An increasing number of studies, largely quantitative in nature, have, however, been recently completed (for example, Daniels, 1985; Gershuny and Miles, 1983; Kaynak, 1986; Kraus, 1983; McKee, 1988). Still, not enough is known about cultural effects of service industries (Roncagliolo, 1985).

The Canadian example

The recently enacted US-Canada Free Trade Agreement offers a particularly useful example of an attempt to deal with the issue of the regulation of trade in services for several reasons: the US has made it clear it considers this agreement a model for the GATT; along with the Omnibus Trade Act of 1988 it constitutes a major revision of US trade policy; though Canada is a developed nation, cultural concerns dominated the resistance, demonstrating clearly the importance of NWIO-type issues for all nations; the opinions of a range of voices have been made available; and some of the real effects of the agreement are coming to be known as the loss of jobs and gain in cultural invasion become felt.

The issue of the trade agreement caused one of the most acrimonious elections in Canada's history in 1988. The stakes were high economically,

and a great deal had been invested in the campaign by American business interests. Three times previously such trade pacts had been rejected by Canadians (Bernier, 1988; Litvak, 1988). Those who opposed the agreement feared integration with the United States economy, which was expected to go beyond the 80 percent of Canadian exports that currently go to US markets; the linkage of computers, electrical grids and hospital organ transplant programs; and the merging of broadcast, print and other mass media audiences (Gold and Leyton-Brown, 1988; Grey, 1983). Then US Trade Ambassador Clayton Yeutter did not allay such fears when he made a comment he later tried to deny: 'The Canadians don't understand what they signed. In 20 years they will be sucked into the US economy' (quoted in Dillon, 1988: 8).

Some thought they did understand, and understood that economic integration was tied to cultural hegemony (*Transnational Data Report*, 1984; Desaulniers, 1987; Smythe, 1981). Robertson Davies (1989), the Canadian novelist who remembers being told to 'Americanize' his plots if he wanted US publication, heard in the debate a very clear statement by Canadians of the importance of non-commodity values to their cultures. David Young (1989), of Toronto's avant-garde writing and publishing community, believes the Free Trade Agreement will incrementally but fundamentally change the structure of Canadian culture over time. And Margaret Atwood (1989) ended her opinion piece in the *Toronto World & Mail* by referring to Kierkegaardian despair.

While the Free Trade Agreement specifically exempts cultural industries from its purview, as Mosco (1990) notes the very wording of the exclusion defines culture as a commodity. Further, the exemptions to the exemption leave substantial portions of the North American communications industries covered. Provisions that don't specifically deal with 'cultural industries' have an effect on those industries nonetheless, as they play such a heavy role in shaping regulatory processes and decisions, thereby playing a structural role. Finally, provisions of the Free Trade Agreement prevent either government from supporting or promoting cultural products of its own citizens or cultural groups, an area in which Canada has been extremely active since the Second World War.

Resentment of the Agreement grows as its effects are felt culturally, in jobs lost, corporate reorganizations and pressures for harmonization in other legal and regulatory affairs. There is talk of dismantling the Agreement should there be a change in Canadian government.

The example of the US-Canada Free Trade Agreement demonstrates how difficult it is even for a developed nation to find a way to accommodate the free trade thrust of the US while protecting its own cultural, social and political interests. Developing nations are much more subject to the exercise of brute force. When asked by a law student what the US response would be should developing nations refuse to go along with the effort to include trade in services under the GATT, Geza Feketekuty, then of the Office of the US Trade Representative, answered, 'We'll make them'.⁴ While this is surely a facetious response, it is indicative of the attitude that has led to real US tactics in the trade arena.

Conclusions

Though little is being heard from the New World Information Order debate in some quarters, it is erupting in others. NWIO concerns about control over national information resources and the right to the value that inheres in the processing of those resources, personal and cultural privacy, access to information, sensitivity to cultural nuances in information use and intention, and the interplay between the international economic order and information flows are now the stuff of discussion within the trade arena. Both developed and developing nations are reluctant to accede to US requests that the GATT agreements, designed to regulate trade in physical goods, be extended to services.

As the NWIO debate has moved from Unesco to the GATT, however, it has evolved in response to the nuances of the new decision-making arena, distinguishable through examination of the GATT's operational definitions, modes of argument, and value hierarchies. Given history, it is not unreasonable that there are great fears of extension or multiplication of the effects of dependency should trade law come to apply to information flows. Rhetorical reliance upon 'free flow' does little to allay fears based upon historical experience, but rather provides a con-

venient hinge to flip between ideological visions having to do with libertarian notions of freedom of speech and pragmatic visions having to do with making more money by shipping more things around the world.

The operational definition of information in use in the trade arena works against NWIO-type concerns through simply denying them ontologically. Uncertainty and openness regarding modes of negotiation and the nature of regulation, however, open up a political space in which aggressive and innovative theoretical and conceptual work may have enormous structural power by shaping the way in which discussions will take place and offer new regulatory tools for use. Similarly, confusion about the locus of constitutional power and, subsequently, about dominant value hierarchies, offers a moment of opportunity to play a role by setting the terms of debate.

Since most countries, both developed and developing, are likely to choose a middle route - accommodation to the international economy to a level that is acceptable when balanced against cultural, social and political concerns - there is a need for much deeper analysis of the cultural impact of various types of information collection, processing and storage activities. The goal would be gaining sufficient knowledge to facilitate identification of a niche in the international information economy that is culturally, politically and socially compatible for every nation and culture concerned.

Last, the insistence upon sector by sector discussions within the GATT should be continued, so that books and newspapers are not treated by international law in the same way as boots and belt buckles. Convenience is not a sufficient argument for shoving everything that flows internationally under the same rug. Even the US may find it to its ultimate cultural advantage to have taken such an approach.

The results of discussions about inclusion of trade in services will have consequences not just within the trade arena but in determining the shape of the emerging international information policy regime. Thus they will have effects across the entire domain of concern to proponents of a New World Information Order. New arguments and strategies, however, must be developed to accommodate the distinct characteristics of the GATT as a decision-making arena.

Notes

- 1 As the line between developed and developing nations becomes what Sjostadt and Sundelius call 'diluted' (1986: 15), the GATT has come to divide countries into three categories: the Eastern trading bloc (the four 'dragonettes' of Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan), developed, and developing nations. Often Brazil, India, some of the OPEC countries and/or Mexico are grouped with the Eastern trading bloc as an elite subset of developing countries called Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs).
- 2 To political scientists, a 'regime' is a group of operational definitions, modes of argument and value hierarchies that provide a basis for international negotiations in a policy issue area. The GATT has often been cited as an example of a successful regime. The unique characteristics of the emerging international information policy regime are explored in Braman (1990).
- 3 The information production chain includes the stages of information creation (via creation, generation or collection), processing (algorithmic or cognitive), storage, transportation, distribution, destruction and seeking.
- 4 In discussion at the University of Chicago Law Forum on Barriers to International Trade in Services, 9 February 1986.

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