

**Isaac A. Blankson, Patrick D. Murphy, eds.** *Negotiating Democracy: Media Transformations in Emerging Democracies*. Global Media Studies Series. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007. xi + 285 pp. \$75.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7914-7233-0.



**Reviewed by** Ariel Barrios-Medina (Center for Science Journalism, Buenos Aires, Argentina)

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## Liberation Media

Comprising twelve contributions from fourteen authors, *Negotiating Democracy* was coedited by two scholars from Southern Illinois University, a native of Ghana who is an associate professor teaching intercultural/international relations, and a professor and the chair of the Department of Mass Communications, teaching transnational media and mass communication theory. The introductory chapter, “Media and Democracy in the Age of Globalization,” written by the coeditors, was prompted by the examination of rhetorical questions about media’s role in the democratization of various societies, that is, the mass media genesis of the global village that media critic Marshall McLuhan envisioned conjoined to the new cultural colonization attained by the economic powers. These themes prove useful points of departure to analyze the changing cultural sovereignty of nations and political potency of communities—in short, the book looks at the kind of

democratic reforms that are taking place and the role the media plays in those reforms.

Part 1, “Regional Trends in Media and Democracy,” includes “Media Independence and Pluralism in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges of Democratization and Liberalization” by the volume’s coeditor Isaac A. Blankson. Blankson points out in a short historical overview that colonialism, its legacy, and the aftermath of the Cold War in Africa were critical in shaping the roles of media in state relationships. During the postindependence era—from 1960 to 1980—and the entry into the global free market in the 1990s, Africa’s media landscape was transformed profoundly and developed an independent and plural media system. This development has resulted in new expectations for emerging roles and relationships mainly by empowering and encouraging those who perform watchdog functions over government. This development of independent media promoted the investigative reporting that shapes

the public conscience about the democratic process and civic engagement. This role of the media in the process of democratization has brought challenges and constraints over broadcasters and journalists who were sometimes imprisoned and killed. Besides, the lack of professionalism among African media practitioners undermines their presumed position as upholders and promoters of democratic principles. Despite deficiencies and against threats and menaces, the African media prove the importance of the continent's trend to democratization and an information society.

The next essay, "Vestiges of Authoritarianism: Monopoly Broadcasting in Central America" by Rick Rockwell, underlines television's ascendancy as a popular and dominant medium for raising new concerns. This chapter analyzes the meaning for the political development toward a more democratic ideal in the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panamá, Honduras, and Costa Rica, looking at the intersection of the power of television broadcasting and political systems. Based on these particular countries, it could be concluded that the struggle for the market led to a tradition of service of state, then the market, and, finally, the citizenry as an afterthought.

The third chapter, "Emerging Media Transformations in the New Europe: Past and Future Challenges" by Noemi Marin and Laura Lengel, focuses on the simultaneous revolutions, involving social transformations, the development of democratic institutions, and liberation or liberalization of the media system after the fall of communism. Furthermore, the chapter uses Romania as a case study of a state-controlled public arena moving toward private, independent, local, and national media in the way the United Nations calls the global information society a revolution.

Part 2, "State Control, Liberalization, and Democratic Reform," includes "An Awakening in Cambodia From Failed State to a Media-Rich Soci-

ety" by Drew O. McDaniel, who sketches a Cambodian panorama from the Khmer Rouge to post-Khmer Rouge politics, concluding with an examination of the contemporary media rich society in Cambodia. "First Democracy in Chinese History: Media's Role in the Democratization of Taiwan" by Kuldip R. Rampal explores the convergence of sociocultural factors showing the rise of democracy in Taiwan. It points to the changes of Taiwanese media from a submissive propaganda organ of the martial law regime to an independent institution pushing for an accountable government.

Chuka Onwumechili, in "Nigeria Equivocating while Opening the Broadcast Liberalization Gates," ponders the Nigerian anomaly, the broadcast market liberalization after the return of a military dictatorship. This relationship between dictatorial leadership and broadcast liberalization was problematically driven by demands from external financial institutions and the public's easy access to satellite signals and foreign radio broadcasting stations. The end of military rule in 1999 with a democratic presidential election gave rise to a civil society, increased freedom of the press, and expanded an unstoppable foreign influence on Nigerian culture.

Part 3, "Television, Radio, Globalization, and Democracy," begins with "Reality Television, Politics, and Democratization in the Arab World" by Marwan M. Kraidy, who discusses the political implications of Arab reality television in Arab public discourse. Kenton T. Wilkinson, in his contribution "Democracy Sponsored by Nafta? Mexican Television in the Free Trade Era," responds to the political and economic changes linked in the globalization process and the national as well as international roles played by media in these changes. In "First Green Is Always Gold: An Examination of the First Private National Channel in Bulgaria," Elza Iboscheva and Maria Raicheva-Stover comment on the developments and processes experienced by the countries of Eastern Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 over consumerism

and citizenship and the social system of communication as the vehicle for advertising and organizing political discourse. Finally, “Globalization and the Privatization of Radio in Greece: Influences, Issues, and Consequences,” by Judy Rene Sims, explores the sociological, political, and economic influences of globalization on the privatization of radio in Greece. This process offered opportunity to the emerging Mediterranean democracy to shape an environment conducive to free expression.

This review highlights only some of the fascinating analyses and provocative conclusions of these authors. They have assembled an immense

amount of data and provided careful sociological interpretations and historical presentations. The fourteen contributors find a disturbing world, while probing human resilience against obscurantism and authoritarianism. The usefulness of this book is unquestionable.

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This author (who is also the volume’s coeditor)

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