

for football in continental Europe is, actually, more descriptive than analytical, but it forefronts the obvious tensions between EU competition law and the national sportive advantages of collective media rights selling, as well as pointing out the ways in which, in the elite circles of the top G14 European clubs and their media partners, football is increasingly – and dangerously – viewed largely in economic, rather than cultural, terms. The later, connected, focus on the media income and competition problems of Rangers and Celtic in the Scottish Premier League is a little less persuasive, this chapter ending with some uncharacteristic speculation and assertion about the possible relevance, beyond Scotland, of the aborted SPL TV channel, and the wider structural implications of the Old Firm's current miserable plight.

The chapter on football players as global celebrities brings us back down a level to the increasingly important struggles over intellectual property and image rights, within and around clubs, that place players, agents, clubs, leagues, manufacturers, TV companies and sponsors and advertisers in a complex network of power imbalances, and claim and counter-claim over media rights and the 'true' market value of players in the global era. Perhaps especially important here are attempts by sponsors, clubs and leagues increasingly to 'manage' their identities, and those of their clients and employees, and to control exactly how they are publicly seen and written about.

On the economic and cultural impact of 'new media' – the Internet, interactive TV and mobile phone technology – the authors are admirable listeners to their impressive roster of interviewees and they weigh up the evidence carefully. They conclude, convincingly again: that the established media have made smart moves here, largely freezing out new ventures; that predicted convergence across technologies has not actually happened; and that Internet and phone opportunities for carrying lucrative football information and coverage have some potential but, like interactive TV, they have also been painfully, expensively hyped. A few major football clubs may have the potential to become global players in some of these areas – extending football's inequalities – but 'lean back' TV sport, rather than 'lean forward' online viewing or mobile phone playback will continue to rule for some time yet.

The book concludes with some necessary if, one suspects, largely ritualistic comment about the lack of vision, in its dealings with the media, of the sport's custodians in failing to secure, through television and new media outlets, 'new communicative spaces for us all to engage with' (p. 164). On how these spaces might look and just how they might be constituted the authors, probably wisely, are silent. I think we can forgive them, for they have delivered the first convincing and measured picture of football in the new media age: and for that I think we should all be grateful.

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Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas, *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of Internet on Authoritarian Rule*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003.

Every new technology has brought the promise of a better world, challenging our imagination and enhancing our expectations. In this sense, the Internet has been no different and, just as with other technologies of the past, this promise has become a matter of faith for many.

However, beyond this superficial view, the relation between technology and society has proven not to be metaphysical but quite materialistic instead, which is precisely the merit of Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas's book. It is a contribution that sees technology as a material development that only makes sense through human intervention. Indeed, the collapse of the so-called dot economy marked the end of a brief but prolific era of unsubstantiated expectations with regard to the Internet, and this book is part of the process of closure.

While many authors still assume the discourse of convergence that portrays the democratic potential of the Internet to promote participation, to create public spaces and to enhance democracy, it is refreshing to see a work that takes a more sceptical and perhaps critical view. It is then also paradoxical that this book comes from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, not exactly a left-wing thinktank.

The book analyses the last bastions of the expectations hype, the so-called influence of new technologies on authoritarian regimes. Based on wide research, and through descriptive and mostly well-documented case studies, it covers several of the last communist states such as China, Vietnam and Cuba, plus a variety of other authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes such as Singapore, Burma and several Arab nations.

This book is above all a well-structured and important contribution to the debate. Even though it is predominantly a descriptive piece with important data, it manages to offer a holistic approach as well, making important links with the wider debate through its six chapters.

Chapter 1 is critical of the so-called 'conventional wisdom' with regard to the irruption of the Internet in our daily life. It points out that a significant amount of the previous literature offers only anecdotal evidence, and that many of the conclusions widely accepted in relation to the Internet and political systems are speculative to some degree.

Chapters 2 and 3 are perhaps better developed and provide a strong and well-structured argument. They present detailed descriptions of how the regimes in China and Cuba deal very differently with the Internet, and how these countries have developed distinctive policies towards this technology. One of the most important conclusions is that it is not orthodox ideology but the pragmatic need to retain political power and economic control that defines their approaches towards the Internet.

Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate how the phenomenon cannot be classified through regions since countries with very similar regimes, which speak the same language and even share borders, have very contrasting policies. However, two important cases are missing: the very elusive North Korea and, in particular, Iran; a fundamental case, the inclusion of which would have allowed this work to become a more definitive reference work.

Chapter 6 may be a disappointment for the reader, not because it fails to provide insightful conclusions, but because it fails to deal with a wider and more complex issue; it fails to see that many of these regimes are in many ways a distorted reflection of our own 'democratic' and 'open' democracies.

The main point made through the data presented in this book is that, far from being a tool of liberation, the Internet may reinforce the mechanisms of control and give further power to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. The book tells us that, with very few exceptions, we should not expect miracles and that, to the contrary, authoritarian regimes are learning very rapidly – with the help of many corporations that care more about profit than democracy – how to avoid the challenges that these new technologies pose by adapting them to their own systems of control. If this is true, and if further research reinforces these findings, it will only be a matter

of time before we see 'democratic' governments 'learning' to use the Internet in similar ways, using the justification, perhaps, of the war on terrorism or child pornography, for instance.

Overall this is an important book, that should become an essential reference for those researching in the area.

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Nick Couldry and James Curran (eds), *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

At the core of Nick Couldry and James Curran's edited volume – part of the series *Critical Media: Institutions, Politics, Culture* – is a comparative exploration of modes of contesting media power, either implicitly or explicitly, in diverse places, under different conditions, and across various media.

The editors' inspired introduction addresses media power within the 'nooks and crannies' of social conflicts, along the lines of the two-way implementation of such power, mediating specific conflicts as well as constituting a ground of conflict in its own right. Against this background, the chapter suggests a broad analytical context, which also encompasses the term 'alternative media' in terms of 'whether indirectly or directly, media power is part of what is at stake' (p. 7), capturing a 'vast range of media production activity'. From this perspective, the other two chapters of this section evaluate new challenges to the concentration of media power. More specifically, W. Lance Bennett's chapter evaluates global, Internet-based social networks in terms of the social and cultural implications of globalization processes. In parallel to a global concentration of media power, an increasing fluidity and mobility of products, information and identities has resulted in a shift of the field of social conflict, from the ideological foundations of social identification to the 'collective individualism' of lifestyle politics (p. 31). Nick Couldry's chapter, drawing on two different philosophies of alternative media practice from the examples of Indymedia and Out There News, evaluates the 'blurring' between producer and consumers, both on the margins of and close to institutional media production respectively. By challenging the very distinction between production and consumption activities, such practices contest the 'entrenched division of labor (producer of stories versus consumer of stories) that is the essence of media power' (p. 45). Despite the fact that this section provides a strong theoretical evaluation of contesting media power across the Internet-enhanced communication space, its purpose is not to provide a consistent framework for the diverse empirical chapters that follow, but rather to generalize views that trigger questions across various local contexts concerning the issue of media power.

Through this prism, the next three parts of the book have been organized along the lines of the relationship between wider social forces and media activity, revealing a rich and heterogeneous landscape of battles that 'enable or constrain media power in specific local conditions' (p. 14), thus highlighting key comparisons between and within the sections. However, the contribution to a theoretical discussion is less developed here, although Rodriguez's essay definitely advances the discussion on alternative media, evaluating them in terms of promoting citizens' exercise of their agency (citizens' media).

The three chapters in Part II make a convincing case for considering the 'fragile' role of state subsidies in the configurations of media's representational power.