
Diana Lemberg. *Barriers Down: How American Power and Free-Flow Policies Shaped Global Media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. 304 pp. ISBN 978-0-231-18217-1, \$26.00 (paper); ISBN 978-0-231-18216-4, \$60.00 (cloth); ISBN 978-0-231-54403-0, \$25.99 (e-book).

Writing before COVID-19 and the resulting stresses on the production, distribution, and consumption of digital information media, Diana Lemberg nonetheless offers an essential and fruitful history of predigital information media and the creation of an international, privatized “marketplace of ideas” in this short American century. Lemberg’s *Barriers Down* provides an account of how American political institutions and media corporations sought to expand press freedoms to include mediums like radio and film as well as entertainment properties produced within those mediums. Governmental support of press freedoms (“positive freedom”) served ever-evolving and privatized broadcasting technologies that flooded the world first with anti-fascist and then with anti-communist narrativizations through news, education programs, and entertainment. The supposition of “information” as inherently neutral, of the “free flow” of information as inherently natural, and of the “free” market as inherently meritocratic and free from monopolistic tendencies, all enabled American corporations to disseminate American ideology throughout the first and third worlds in an effort to combat the spread of communism and increase profits.

Lemberg’s *Barriers Down* picks up where works like Daniel R. Headrick’s *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851–1945* (1991) leave off; Lemberg focuses on how the United States asserted itself in global postwar media. Lemberg’s analysis and narrative, while certainly informed by Paul Lazarsfeld, mass communication studies, and the likes of Timothy Glander’s *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War: Educational Effects and Contemporary Implications* (2000), takes on mass communication and propaganda as a global phenomenon mediated by global bureaucratic organizations, not primarily as a domestic concern. Lemberg does draw on Emily Rosenberg’s *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (2011), among other examinations of ideological and economic American postwar conquest, but is ultimately far more interested in the actual mechanisms by which ideology is spread than the content of the ideology itself.

The thrust of *Barriers Down* is letters, memos, and reports, relying on vast institutional archives like UNESCO’s to trace critical postwar battles over sovereignty and the right to regional and national media protections. American advocates for the “free flow” of information clashed with European (particularly French and Francophile) representatives at

UNESCO and later with decolonized nations seeking to establish a local culture of information consumption free from or with limited imperial influence. Within UNESCO, European countries raised concerns over the unequal distribution of resources like newsprint in the years just after World War II; in 1950, UNESCO found that the United States consumed 60 percent of the world's newsprint (54). Increasingly, French representatives resisted the proliferation of English-language media in the first and third world and engaged in efforts to promote French-language media abroad in order to maintain French as the world's lingua franca.

Though not a dedicated institutional history, *Barriers Down* feels similar to one when characterizing the battles within and policies of UNESCO and other international organizations. Lemberg nimbly pieces together the careers of various bureaucrats in such a way that the reader does not feel lost or too embroiled with inessential details. Each chapter has a clear tack, taking up a new aspect of the existing landscape of the previous chapters, and represents a progression in chronology, with the final chapter concluding in 1984 with the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO. The bibliographic index of archival research and multilingual publications suggest the thoroughness of the research.

Barriers Down offers a prehistory to modern debates over Internet freedoms and digital sovereignty. Lemberg gestures at the Internet age in the epilogue with reflections on Secretary Hillary Clinton's 2010 statements on Internet freedoms, *Citizens United*, and post-2016 interrogations of Internet platforms like Facebook and Google. A broader consideration of how other nations (particularly decolonized states) and featured institutions like UNESCO have legislated and developed language for Internet freedoms may have warranted inclusion, though perhaps inconvenient in the limitations of an epilogue.

Diana Lemberg is currently developing a project with the working title of "Applied Linguistics in the American Century," which will center on U.S. "language-training pedagogies and technologies" in twentieth century landscapes of decolonization and international development.

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