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ASSERTING A REGIONAL APPROACH TO THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Complex Cases of Latin American and South Asian Media/Journalism

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Introduction

The concept of the Global South is tied to the history of colonialism (Kaltmeier, Lindner & Mailaparambil (2011) . Mignolo & Escobar (2010) have framed the Global South as shaped by epistemic, political, and economic asymmetries stemming from colonial histories. That history of dominance and global asymmetry continues to shape societies in different parts of the world. Regions such as Latin America and South Asia, which have experienced colonialism from the rule of more powerful nations, could learn from their shared histories and work together to challenge, and overcome colonialism and global inequalities (Kaltmeier et al., 2011). This approach reflects a solidarity-based vision of the Majority World to align its potential as a political entity, not just as a geographical or economic category.

Yet multiple geopolitical forces continue acting against this idea of collaboration. For instance, the way some politicians, media, scholars, journals, universities, and particularly more privileged nations from both the North and South articulate the concept of the Global South often does not reflect its noble aim to overcome imbalances of power inherited from the colonial past. Frequently, the term “Global South” has been used to patronize regions or obscure local and regional dynamics. To counter this trend, news media can contribute meaningfully to a transformative vision of the Global South by fostering a more regionally grounded perspective on economic, political, and social issues and by actively defending the region’s autonomy in shaping its own media agendas. However, growing ownership concentration among conglomerates, violence toward the press, the dominance of digital platforms and the historically close relationship between media organization and political and economic elites represent challenges for journalism and media in these regions. Despite multiple geopolitical limitations, mainly stemming from authoritarian attitudes that seek to disconnect nations and regions, and from behaviors by and toward the media, there are numerous initiatives that demonstrate the potential to overcome these colonial legacies.

In this chapter we aim to emphasize a regional vision of the concept of the Global South that helps to overcome colonial flaws and imbalances. Plural meanings of the Global

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South –which take into consideration, for instance, the Latin American and South Asian experiences and contributions – could not only open new political and social goals associated with it, but also increase its potential for political leverage and mobilization (Brun, 2023). Therefore, we argue there is a need for more nuanced approaches that consider regional and local specificities that share common features to empower the idea of Global South and articulate it to promote change and emancipation from the current system using states, regional histories, trade agreements, civil societies, and academia (Brun, 2023).

This chapter puts the colonial legacies that have shaped both Latin America and South Asia into historical context, particularly in relation to their media landscapes. It examines the contemporary challenges faced by journalists in these regions, including political, economic, and institutional constraints. Furthermore, it explores how alternative media and citizen journalism challenge traditional media hierarchies, creating new spaces for representation and resistance. The chapter also highlights the distinct academic and journalistic traditions within Latin America and South Asia that enrich the conceptualization of the Global South by grounding it in regional specificities. Ultimately, it advances the notion of *Regional Approaches to the Global South* as a way to provide a more nuanced understanding of the term, one that acknowledges historical continuities and contextual differences, and that supports efforts to overcome limitations inherited from their colonial pasts.

Regional Case 1: Latin America

In this section, we present Latin America as our first case to illustrate our thesis about the benefits of a cohesive regional approach to strengthen the concept of the Global South and open new pathways for inclusion and progress.

Latin America is a vast region comprising 20 countries, spanning a significant portion of the Americas – from the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, shared by Argentina and Chile, to Central America, to the Rio Grande (also known as the Bravo River) at the U.S.-Mexico border. The region includes most of the Caribbean, South and Central America. Two main languages unify this extensive territory: Spanish and Portuguese, with a smaller population (around 3 percent) speaking French. The region also has large Indigenous populations that speak languages such as Quechua, Nahuatl, Guarani, Aymara and Muisca, among others. Covering more than 20 million square kilometers, Latin America is home to more than 665 million people, which represents 8 percent of the total population of the world (Worldometer, 2024). Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and Peru are the most populated countries in the region.

One of the defining characteristics of Latin America is its colonial past. Its inhabitants, lands, and resources were exploited by the Spanish, Portuguese, and French empires, whose conquistadors – acting as emissaries of their Crowns – arrived in the fifteenth century in search of an alternative trade route to India and driven by utopian ideals centered on God, gold, honor, and fame. Although there was a cultural mix and clash, major Indigenous civilizations, such as the Aztecs and Incas, were subdued by military, cultural and technological advances, and were subjected to various forms of exploitation, including forced labor, slavery, expropriation, and abuse. Most of the Spanish colonial empire ruled the region until the nineteenth century, when the wars of independence freed the peoples in these territories from colonial rule, though Indigenous populations continued to be oppressed by creole leaderships of the nascent republics. Religion (Catholic evangelization), culture (Hispanic heritage), and language initially served as potential unifiers of the former Spanish and Portuguese empires.

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However, following independence in most of Latin America, it quickly became evident that fragmented national interests thwarted efforts at integration, and that powerful nations like the United States, England and France began a new wave of expansion over the territory, and a new neocolonial dependency was structured through trade, debt, investment, and control over export economies (Taylor, 2003; Knight, 1999).

Origin of the Concept of Latin America

Emphasizing linguistic and cultural affinities with the Romance civilizations, the French intellectual Michel Chevalier was the first to postulate the idea of the existence of a “Latin race,” which – he argued – inhabited large parts of the Americas and could culturally ally itself with the Latin Europe, in contraposition with the Anglo-Saxon and the Slavic Europe (Mignolo, 2005). Although the term supported the argument of opposing British and US imperialist ambitions in the Americas, Chevalier’s ideas were used by Napoleon III to justify French imperial ambitions toward Mexico (Gobat, 2013). After Mexican Independence (1821), and the Mexican–American War (1846–1848), Napoleon III occupied Mexico (1862–1867) with a short-lived experiment in a Second Empire, via French rule with Emperor Maximilian I as its representative.

Other intellectuals such as Uruguayan Arturo Ardao and Chilean Miguel Rojas Mix have indicated that the term “Latin America” had been used in the 1850s to protest U.S. expansion into the Southern Hemisphere (Gobat, 2013). Also, two seminal essays on American identity, “Our America” (1891) by the Cuban writer/journalist José Martí and “Ariel” (1900) by the Uruguayan thinker José Enrique Rodó, emerged during the Cuban War, addressing the threat of U.S. domination in the Caribbean and South America potentially replacing the Spanish Empire (De Matsushita, 2011). Therefore, the origins of the term “Latin America” can be traced back to the nineteenth century as a response to post-independence imperialistic interventions in the Americas and as an explanation of the clash between North and South. The fact that Latin America continues to be a powerful geopolitical space underscores the significance of “entities located between the national and the global – especially to advance anti-imperial projects” (Gobat, 2013, p. 1345).

*Latin American Media Systems: The Evolving Relationship
Between Media and State*

The region’s unique historical and sociopolitical challenges, inherited from the colonial period, shape how media operate and interact with contemporary democracies. Particularly the relationship with political and economic elites has marked the emergence of different media systems.

Latin American media systems were categorized into the captured-liberal model (Guerrero & Marquez-Ramírez, 2014), as a response to Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) seminal work on the Western world. This model operated within free markets, but media policy was largely determined by media owners who – in turn – provided support to the state (Paxman, 2020). This system allowed governments and media to work in a friendly symbiotic way during the 1980s and 1990s (Guerrero & Marquez-Ramírez, 2014). The system functioned particularly well for television and newspapers, which allied with neoliberal governments during the late 1980s and 1990s, allowing Globo from Brazil, Televisa from Mexico, Clarín from

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Argentina, and Caracol and RCN from Colombia, among others, to diversify their businesses and become multi-industry groups that expanded into other services (Paxman, 2020).

However, recent events in the region have challenged the idea of a captured-liberal model as the best way to describe Latin American media systems. Guerrero et al. (2024), for instance, revised the concept and proposed the term *media regimes* (roles) that respond to the political orientation of the government in office, generating two different positions: A corporate-consensus or a confrontational media regime. Political change and instability have caused the media to oscillate between cooperating with the government and challenging its policies, depending on the party in power. For example, around the 2000s, when leftist and center-left leaders took power in the region (e.g., Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and more recently Mexico and Colombia), the old symbioses as well as the power of mainstream media began to erode (Paxman, 2020). State-media relations today are more complex due to the unfulfilled expectations of democracy, the role of independent journalists who continue to serve as watchdogs, and the rapid digitalization and culture of entrepreneurship that permeate the media landscape (Paxman, 2020; SembraMedia, 2023).

Drawing on postcolonial theory, Global South system differentiation, and uneven regional development, argue that colonial ties to the West have shaped Latin American media systems through power centralization among elites, elite struggles over media narratives and access, a strong state role in structuring media systems, and the emergence of regional and local subsystems negotiated in relation to the state. They contend that a historical focus on colonial institutional legacies is essential for advancing media systems theory in the Global South.

How Latin American Media Operate in the Regional Context

Latin America has highly concentrated media structures owned by large corporations with businesses and interests in diverse sectors such as telecommunication, transportation, and construction (Mastrini & Becerra, 2011; García-Perdomo, 2024). Therefore, traditional media operate beyond news production, entertainment, and information. Televisa in Mexico, Globo in Brazil, Clarín in Argentina, the Cisneros Group in Venezuela, and Caracol and RCN in Colombia are the dominant forces of the media landscape in the region (González Pazos, 2020). The media are perceived as part of the institutional establishment, very close to political and economic elites. As with other traditional institutions, media trust has been in decline in most countries (Edelman, 2023).

Since 2010, and as a consequence of the digital disruption of the media ecosystem, international corporations and platforms based in the United States and Europe have secured a privileged position in Latin America by using cutting-edge technologies, investing in the region, and acquiring local media outlets. Similar to what is happening globally, Google, Meta and Amazon dominate online advertising and use algorithms to engage audiences with services such as instant messaging and social video (García-Perdomo, 2024). Streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney +, among others, have dislocated national television news, entertainment production houses and long-standing networks. Big tech companies are not the only key players entering the region as international media conglomerates are also doing it. For instance, the Prisa Group from Spain, owner of newspapers El País, now has a presence in ten Latin American countries, including Brazil, where it owns more than 1,200 radio stations and appears as the broadcasting leader in Colombia and Chile.

The colonial past of Latin America, based on extractive economies (e.g. Argentina's and Brazil's cattle ranches, Mexico and Venezuela's oil, Chile's minerals and fruits), has influenced

the way innovation and technology are adopted in the region. Indeed, the systematic extraction of resources to supply the needs of the more industrialized nations has made Latin American countries suppliers of raw materials, becoming exporters of basic resources that are processed and resold in international markets. Extractive economies, we argue, can stagnate innovation and sources of wealth. In the case of media, these organizations have been adopters of computer and digital technologies but have had a hard time thinking of themselves as producers, transformers, or innovators of technologies (Salaverría & de-Lima-Santos, 2021).

Some journalists and media outlets might be an exception to this pattern of extraction. Recent studies show that journalists in Latin America are adopting new technologies that change the way people receive information, indicating a transformation that focuses more on the audience's perspective and generates new formats and interactions with digital technology (de Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2020). For example, data journalism media in Latin America such as Rutas del Conflicto (Colombia), PostData.club (Cuba), and Proyecto Poder (Mexico), among others, understand the difficulties they face in accessing reliable databases and open technologies that respond to the needs of the region (Magaña & García-Perdomo, 2024). Therefore, they are working on the creation of their own databases and open-code tools to offer greater transparency and trust in their research processes (Magaña & García-Perdomo, 2024). These trends toward self-determination of the media in their relationship with digital technology suggests that the integration between technology, data and journalism would be essential for the future sustainability of the media industry in the region, and for rebuilding the damaged trust in news producers (De Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2020).

Additionally, studies show that national media companies “rely on regulators to pass bills that help support their local business position” and give them privilege and time to catch up with their online products and innovations (Diez & Bertoni, 2024). This protectionist approach to business is undermining the media economies of the region and overlooking the opportunity to think beyond national borders and tap into the vast potential of Latin America's 650 million people. Other factors such as high labor informality, lack of access to credit and banking, and high levels of poverty in the region also threaten the economic stability of media and business models into the future (Diez & Bertoni, 2024).

In this difficult environment, digital native and alternative media have grown significantly in the region taking advantage of low costs to produce and publish content serving niche markets that had been neglected by traditional media (SembraMedia, 2023). These online media use diversified business models and are financed with international funding (García-Perdomo & Magaña, 2020). Community and alternative radio in digital formats are particularly strong in some regions where communities seek self-determination through their own narratives and stories.

The region's potential is notable not only because of its large population unified by shared languages and cultures, but also because Latin America leads global digital media consumption, with audiences spending an average of three more hours per day on social networks than users elsewhere (Diez & Bertoni, 2024). Latin America and the Caribbean constitute the world's fifth-largest social media market, with over 300 million users in South America alone, driven by increased internet penetration and mobile connectivity (Statista, 2024). While the pandemic accelerated digitalization, significant gaps persist between urban and rural areas, and the region's potential for inclusive connectivity and service delivery remains underdeveloped, despite basic mobile internet coverage reaching most of the population

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(World Bank, 2024). Mobile-first consumption – particularly social video – has fueled the growth of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as online gaming and messaging apps like WhatsApp, a pattern common across much of the Global South (Digital News Report, 2024).

At the same time, news consumption on legacy social networks such as Facebook and X has declined sharply, weakening key distribution channels for media organizations (Digital News Report, 2024, 2025). Trust in social media information is also eroding, as audiences report difficulty distinguishing accurate information from mis/disinformation in feeds and private chats (Digital News Report, 2025). In this context, the growing role of Latin American fact-checking outlets has been central to countering information disorders and revitalizing journalism (Riedlinger et al., 2024). However, rising political polarization and hate speech – often targeting journalists and other groups – underscore that high levels of connectivity do not necessarily translate into stronger democratic deliberation or participation.

Other challenges for media and journalism in Latin America are direct and indirect violence and pressures on freedom of the press, exercised by governments, autocracies, public officials, organized crime groups, and illegal armed actors. Mexico and Colombia are currently the most dangerous countries in which to practice journalism due to the multiple murders of journalists during the last decades – since 2000, 62 journalists have been murdered in Colombia, according to the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP), and 144 in Mexico, according to the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico (CNDH). The most recent report by Reporters Without Borders (2024) indicates that political leaders are increasingly attacking journalists and the media in their speeches. This situation of tension and violence is aggravated by “disinformation campaigns, abusive judicial actions and state propaganda, which foster mistrust towards the press and favor polarization” (Reporters Without Borders, 2024). Particularly, covering drug trafficking, activities of armed actors, public and private corruption, and the environment has become a problem in Latin America, where illegal and corrupt actors silence the media and journalists in various ways (RSF, 2024; González de Bustamante & Relly, 2015). This situation has generated self-censorship in the region and hindered the work and autonomy of journalists as watchdogs of the powers in society (Mesquita & de-Lima-Santos, 2023; González de Bustamante & Relly, 2021).

Also, large-scale protests across Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and Chile have posed growing challenges for Latin American news organizations (García-Perdomo et al., 2024). As recent mobilizations have involved broad segments of the population, journalists and traditional media have increasingly become targets both offline and online. Attacks on reporters covering demonstrations have become increasingly common, as many protesters blame the media for being biased and delegitimizing social protests in highly polarized contexts.

Simultaneously, social media platforms – while instrumental in reducing political intermediation and facilitating collective action – have also become digital spaces where journalists face harassment from angry users or coordinated smear campaigns by various actors. These large-scale mobilizations reflect growing civic engagement and democratic participation in Latin America, yet they simultaneously intensify pressure on the media.

Media Education

Universities teaching communication and journalism in Latin America have been criticized for following the parameters imposed by European/U.S. institutions of higher education, although some institutions have incorporated contextual elements that apply to a much more

regional approach to education. Universities in the region face not only a generalized drop in enrollments and a demographic decline, but also the expansion of elite international universities, particularly from Spain and the United States, that are entering the region with aggressive online programs, generating even more pressures on a disrupted market.

In the academy, the intersection of media studies and critical sociology has fostered a counter-hegemonic approach, emphasizing participatory media that contests power and addresses social inequalities (Lugo-Ocando & Marchesi, 2023). This evolution has led to distinctive Latin America media theories that prioritize inclusivity and social justice. Although at the end of the nineteenth-century scholars tended to “reproduce European ideas” taking positivist and economic liberalism approaches, and the press was understood as an establishment of progress and consensus through elites, later on, Marxism, dependency theory and mediation approaches spread across the continent “contesting core assumptions, ultimately leading to their insertion in a more global trend that anchored its analysis in challenges to post-colonialism and modernity” (p. 770). For instance, media scholars such as Armand Mattelart and Jesús Martínez Barbero incorporate notions of the “popular” and hybridized representations of culture, as well as resistance, as central concepts in media and communication studies (Lugo-Ocando & Marchesi, 2023).

In sum, Latin America’s media landscapes – much like other regional institutions – continue to bear the imprint of colonial legacies as many outlets still rely heavily on external influences, technology, and foreign capital while working with elites to adopt protectionist strategies to safeguard their commercial interests, often overlooking their broader social responsibilities. As a result, they struggle to take a more regional/local contextual approach that advances an inclusive and participatory perspective in their functions. Also, they face great challenges such as political instability, disinformation, violence, and dependency. Yet because Latin America continues to be a solid geopolitical concept and regional force – located between the national and the global – media outlets (e.g., alternative, investigative and independent press) can shape/reflect through their narratives territorial identities, political struggles, and cultural flows across southern contexts (Iqani & Resende, 2019), offering spaces for advancing anti-colonialism projects and promoting innovation and social change, which may open options to improve the agency of the Global South and to ensure media and journalism independence and transformation.

Regional Case 2: South Asia

In this section, we examine the second regional case – South Asia – to extend our argument that a historically and contextually informed understanding of regions with shared colonial legacies can enhance the concept of the Global South and contribute to addressing present-day imbalances, ultimately fostering greater justice and progress.

Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, comprise South Asia. The region has 25.29 percent of the world’s population with a density of 323 people per square kilometer, and a median age of 27.1 years (Worldometer, 2024). Its rich and complex history and development are marked by an array of languages, religions, and cultures (Bose & Jalal, 2022) and its imperial past. As German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel, put it, “[F]or it is the necessary fate of Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans.” (Stone, 2020). According to projections, South Asia is poised to grow 6.1 percent in 2025, marked by the recovering economies of Pakistan and Sri Lanka and booming development in India (Open Knowledge, 2024).

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Yet in the years since independence (beginning in the late 1940s through the 1970s), challenging issues of stability, peace, often authoritarian leadership, complex social divisions and structural threats have created a dichotomous and often contentious image of South Asia, especially, in the imaginary of the West (Bose & Jalal, 2022) where, on the one hand, the region is lauded for its ancient almost mystical historical past and, on the other, derided for its unequal development highly dependent on public spending and changing climatic conditions (World Bank, 2024). Characteristics of inequity and underdevelopment, remnants of its colonial past, categorize it as part of the Global South, a term that rather inadequately captures its complex evolution and multilateral power relations (Dados, 2020).

From the mid-eighteenth century through the mid-twentieth century (roughly 1757 to 1970s), South Asia's experience under imperial control impacted its history and development, profoundly influencing local and Indigenous knowledge systems that gradually transformed to reflect the power that sought to centralize it (Guha, 2023). Its colonial past recast the Indian sub-continent creating three of its most populous countries (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) and acted as an agent of change to introduce shifts that branded its politics, social structures and economics, in an atmosphere marked by anticolonial resistance (Bose & Jalal, 2022). Institutions, especially those related to media and media education, share characteristics shaped by common historical antecedents and developments that may not be immediately obvious globally (Udupa & McDowell, 2017). As Arjun Guneratne and Anita M. Weiss state, "[O]ne way to think about the politics of modern South Asia is to ask how the institutions and political forms that the region inherited from British rule have fared in the decades since" (Guneratne & Weiss, 2014).

South Asian Media: Battling Divides

Since the early 1990s, South Asia has been considered a dominant consumer and creator of media products, but this is a picture fractured by scenarios where journalists are censored by army and government resources in Pakistan and are murdered with impunity in Sri Lanka and further in countries such as India and Bangladesh where social media and digital platforms can spark riots (Udupa & McDowell, 2017). Ethnic, linguistic, and prominent regional diversities entangled with national and subnational identities add complicated nuances (Neyazi, 2018).

Television is a particularly powerful medium, an important venue of entertainment and information (Chakravartty & Roy, 2013), and the medium is profoundly influenced by political and financial partnerships (Rahman, 2020). Contrary to World Bank reports, and general Western media analyses, television in Bangladesh, for example, besides being a medium of immense influence, operates as an amalgam of informal political associations and as a state and corporate nexus (Rahman, 2020; Azad, 2019; Muhammad, 2015). This is similar to the situation in India where policies related to liberalization and privatization in the early 1990s saw the entry of outside media players like CNN and BBC and the growth of domestic operations such as Sun TV and Asianet (StockGro, 2024).

This growth of domestic and international media and influence does not necessarily result in equitable news coverage of the less powerful and resource poor, nor does it indicate a celebration of religious and ethnic diversity. South Asian media are often critiqued for their lack of focus on poverty and on rural areas (Pain, 2018). As the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) has emphasized, religion in South Asia is mostly framed and covered as part of important political events rather than as a part of the social fabric.

Media ownership today is considered as repressive as the British press policies in India since the 1820s onward. A nexus of politician and corporate owned, and cross-media ownership today concern regulators of diverse content because of its potential impact on public interest reportage (Parthasarathi & Srinivas, 2019). Exacerbating the situation is the mostly negative effect of social media on the information ecosystem. South Asia is a “particularly interesting case” that shows how in the absence of moderators such as robust education systems and independent media, digital platforms can be effective mobilizers to initiate, spread and engender falsehood with impunity (Paladino, 2018). Thus, decolonizing media in the Global South involves critically examining and transforming media systems, practices, education, and narratives that have been shaped by colonial histories, which continue to reflect Western or elite-centered dominance, with the aim of restoring local voices, knowledge systems, and cultural autonomy. For instance, many media ownership patterns in South Asia and Latin America remain concentrated among political and economic elites, a legacy of colonial hierarchies that centralized power and limited pluralism. Journalism education, too, continues to draw heavily on Western theories and normative models, often sidelining Indigenous storytelling traditions and local epistemologies. Even news values, language hierarchies, and professional ethics tend to privilege colonial languages and Western ideals of objectivity over community-centered or decolonial approaches to truth-telling.

Increasing access to mobile phones and the internet has led to the dissemination of misinformation that is intensifying community strife to undermining democracy in the region (Carothers, & O'Donohue, 2020). Yet there is no denying that movements toward decolonization that challenge Western assumptions are underway (Hoang, Zhen, & Shaturaev, 2023). While press freedom in South Asia is often questioned, analysis of the media in countries like Pakistan show that while media here may be hostage to economics and political machinations, they also provide spaces for everyday people to discover and learn more about the country, especially when physical movement is often restricted by crumbling infrastructure and safety concerns (Gill-Khan, 2017). What threatens this movement toward a decolonized approach is the deep polarization that is gradually characterizing South Asia. The deeply divisive British-era policy of divide and rule is finding new ground in countries like India and Sri Lanka, where ethnic and ideological strains are exacerbating historical divides via political and social means that are powerful enough to threaten the health of democracy (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2020).

South Asia's media freedom record is poor with 232 violations of human rights which include attacks, murders, and targeted harassment (IFJ, 2024). Between May 2023 and April 2024, as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) recorded, nearly 87 journalists were jailed or detained in South Asia. Reports show that, along with journalistic freedoms, digital spaces are being surveilled as well. As traditional media increasingly transition to online platforms, journalists in the region are frequently persecuted for publishing content that challenges dominant political or powerful interests (Gomez, 2021).

Much of South Asia protects press freedom through legal means but Freedom House 2020 reports that journalism in South Asian countries is “partly free.” Since 2020, India is no longer considered “free” and now falls into the “partly free” category because of discrimination against Muslims and lack of media independence (Neyazi, 2018).

Self-censorship, among journalists, especially if they work in their local languages, is rife. This is very similar to the situation in Venezuela where younger journalists who have worked under press suppression consider self-suppression a requirement of the profession (Pain &

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Korin, 2021). The power of broadcasting was viewed and used by colonial powers as an influential tool of political control. But the use of such media by subversive voices, during colonial and recent times, has proven that media (Lekgoathi et al., 2020) can also be a powerful tool of resistance to frame atrocities and inspire communities to act. The rise of citizen journalism and alternative media, on the rise in South Asia, is testimony to this (Pain, 2024). The CGNet Swara and Video Volunteers in India are examples.

Citizen Media: South Asia

Since the 2004 earthquake in the Indian Ocean and resulting tsunami in South Asia, the concept of citizen journalism has gained currency, and media have grown as a reaction and protest against mainstream media that were not covering issues affecting the poor (Pain, 2024). In India, citizen journalism ranges from using basic mobile phones to record stories and messages (CGNet Swara) to using cameras (Video Volunteers), producing rational newspapers, and using multimedia to highlight issues (Khabar Lahariya) (Pain & Chen, 2019). Refugees, a socially marginalized group, generally ignored by mainstream media, find space in stories produced by citizen journalists in Pakistan (Zach, 2022). Journalists in Nepal may be persecuted, but its rich community radio stations have provided forums for people to forward information about local issues. Nepal also has the distinction of having the first all-women community radio station in South Asia (Dahal, 2013). Citizen journalism also faces certain challenges. Citizen and alternative media also face government surveillance, with journalists and media producers often encountering targeted oppression (Pain, 2024). In spite of such tensions, if communication is ‘the creative making of a social order’ (Hamilton, 2000, p. 361), then alternative and citizen media in South Asia provide significant means for a reimagining of the dominant views frequently found in the mainstream.

De-Westernizing Journalism Education

South Asia’s growing media scene emphasizes the need for media professionals. Similar to media and communication education systems in Latin America, South Asia’s journalism education has often been critiqued for its overreliance on Western curricula, theories, and pedagogical models that prioritize commercial media values and U.S./Euro-Centric perspectives. These critiques highlight how such frameworks frequently overlook local communication traditions, indigenous epistemologies, and the socio-political complexities of postcolonial contexts. This dependence on imported frameworks has been seen as a form of recolonization of knowledge – one that privileges Western notions of professionalism and objectivity while ignoring the realities and needs of local media ecosystems within which these institutions operate (Ullah, 2022; Cheung, 2009). Scholars have argued that post-colonial countries need to develop curricula rooted in their realities rather than in normative theories from the West (Ullah, 2022). Certain changes, such as encouraging project-based learning, facilitating knowledge rather than conventional teaching and encouraging hands-on learning, are increasingly characterizing media education in South Asia (Cheung, 2009). The recent pandemic has encouraged a greater reliance on communities that have helped overcome the lack of technical expertise and availability (Pain, Ahmed, & Zahra Khalid, 2022). Yet certain gaps remain. While regional language media have grown, especially in India and Pakistan, journalism training in local languages requires support (Malik, 2022).

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Colonial legacies remain visible through government repression and corporate and political control of the media. These influences restrict the free flow of information and create an atmosphere of fear that hinders journalism. Cooperation with countries in Latin America and studying similar situations may help identify potential solutions. Trinh Nguyen, co-founder of Rise, which works with activists in South Asia, encourages the sharing of intelligence between countries in South Asia to overcome impediments (Aljazeera, 2024).

Common Factors for a Regional Approach of the Global South

South Asian and Latin American media and journalism today reflect a set of complex histories deeply intertwined with colonial legacies. Understanding these histories and the specific regional dynamics that shape them can enhance the agency of the Global South. A more grounded, comparative research agenda – centered on these local realities – could help implement regional approaches that respond collectively to shared historical problems. In practice, this could involve developing cross-regional frameworks that analyze media systems not just as national phenomena, but as products of colonial encounters, economic dependencies, and socio-political resistance. For example, researchers might compare how privatization policies in the 1990s reshaped public broadcasting in India and Brazil or examine the similar ways that corporate media ownership and concentration in Mexico and Pakistan curtails journalistic independence. This kind of comparative research could generate new media theories rooted in Global South realities rather than adapting U.S./Euro-centric paradigms.

Comparative approaches could include building networks of scholars from the Majority World who co-author studies, develop regional curricula, and challenge dominant models of journalism education. Collaborative projects might study how citizen journalism in Colombia and Nepal resists elite-controlled narratives or how alternative media in rural India and Indigenous communities in Bolivia promote participatory forms of communication. Policy-wise, this approach could foster transnational coalitions among civil society organizations and media watchdogs in South Asia and Latin America, enabling them to share strategies for resisting censorship, protecting journalists, and regulating global tech companies that dominate digital discourse.

Both Latin American and South Asian media landscapes continue to grapple with the impact of British, Spanish, Portuguese, and American imperialism and with the resulting political, social, and economic inequities. Colonialism played a significant role in shaping media institutions and practices in South Asia and Latin America, often using media as a tool for political control and cultural dominance.

Ownership structures in both regions also reflect colonial-era centralization of power – now reconfigured through corporate and political alliances. As a result, journalists face ongoing threats to their safety, autonomy, and capacity to serve the public interest. Digital platforms, though promising for marginalized voices, have become sites of political manipulation and misinformation. In Sri Lanka, Mexico, Guatemala, and Colombia, digital tools have been weaponized to incite violence, replicating colonial divide-and-rule tactics through algorithmic amplification and networked propaganda.

Despite these challenges, growing efforts to decolonize media in South Asia and Latin America are attempts to reclaim agency. Alternative media and citizen journalism projects,

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such as CGNet Swara in India and community radio in Nepal and throughout South America, provide vital counter-narratives. These initiatives foreground the concerns of marginalized communities, reimagine communication as a participatory process, and resist both historical and contemporary forms of colonialism.

Ultimately, this type of regional approach means building shared tools, theories, and solidarities that emerge from these localized struggles – not from imposed frameworks. This can cultivate more inclusive, democratic, and contextually rooted models of journalism that challenge global hierarchies and affirm regional autonomy.

South Asian and Latin American media and journalism today reflect a set of complex histories deeply intertwined with colonial legacies. Understanding and research about their regional dynamics and histories could enhance the ability of media actors in the Global South to implement regional approaches that respond collectively to mutual historical problems. Both regions' media landscapes continue to grapple with the impact of British, Spanish, Portuguese and American imperialism and the resulting political, social, and economic transformations and inequities. Colonialism played a significant role in shaping media institutions and practices in South Asia and Latin America, often introducing media as a tool of political control and cultural dominance.

Post-independence, the media in South Asia and Latin America have struggled with issues of freedom, censorship, and ownership – many of which are echoes of colonial repression. In India, Colombia, Chile, and Brazil, the liberalization and privatization of media in the 1990s enabled increased foreign investment and influence, including the entry of global and transnational corporations like CNN and BBC. Moreover, the political machinations surrounding media ownership resemble colonial practices where a select few (corporates or governments) hold power over media narratives, controlling what can and cannot be discussed publicly. This has led to a dangerous environment for journalists in the region, where violations of journalistic freedoms are rampant, with many journalists being harassed, imprisoned, or killed.

Social media platforms, while offering new opportunities for marginalized voices, have also become new battlegrounds where misinformation and political manipulation thrive. The use of digital platforms to incite violence, as seen in Sri Lanka, Mexico, Guatemala, and Colombia, demonstrates how colonial-era divide-and-rule strategies have morphed into twenty-first-century tools of oppression. In these cases, colonial legacies of ethnic and religious divisions are exacerbated by digital misinformation, often with political and corporate backing.

Despite these challenges, there are growing movements and efforts to decolonize media in South Asia and Latin America. This involves reclaiming narratives through alternative media and citizen journalism, which focus on local issues ignored by mainstream media. The rise of platforms like CGNet Swara in India and community radio stations in Nepal and South America exemplifies how marginalized communities are using media to resist both historical legacies and contemporary forms of neo-colonialism. These organizations not only challenge the remnants of colonial control but also create spaces for more democratic and inclusive representations.

In both South Asia and Latin America, media systems stand as mirrors of history – etched with colonial scars, yet also pulsing with resistance and reinvention. The enduring impact of imperialism has shaped not only institutions but imaginations, delimiting who gets to speak, what stories are told, and whose knowledge counts. Yet, within these same landscapes of

suppression, grassroots and independent voices have steadily carved out spaces of agency – challenging the dominance of inherited structures and reclaiming media as a tool for liberation rather than control.

Decolonizing media in the Global South is therefore not simply an academic exercise or a rhetorical flourish – it is an urgent, ongoing project of epistemic justice. It involves refusing the silencing of marginalized communities, rejecting media models that privilege market interests over public good, and resisting digital colonization by global tech giants. Crucially, it requires building new solidarities: a regional vision of the Global South that honors specificity, encourages comparative dialogue, and advances a shared commitment to justice and dignity.

South Asia and Latin America – though distinct in geography and cultures – share a common struggle: to overcome legacies that once defined them by their subjugation and now seek to confine them within sanitized global narratives. Through community media, citizen journalism, critical pedagogy, and cross-regional collaboration, these regions are scripting alternative futures – ones that are plural, participatory, and rooted in local realities.

By turning to one another – not to mimic, but to learn and co-create – these regions can develop new frameworks that not only critique global inequalities but actively transform them. The Global South, then, becomes not just a category of suffering, but a coalition of creation – capable of shaping media systems that reflect the full breadth of their histories, resistances, and possibilities. In reimagining media through a regional and decolonial lens, South Asia and Latin America illuminate a path forward – not only for themselves, but for the world. They remind us that, to reclaim the future, we must first reclaim the power to tell our own stories.

Further Reading

Adelman, J., Prakash, G. (2022). *Inventing the Third World: In Search of Freedom for the Postwar Global South*. Bloomsbury Academic: London, UK. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/inventing-the-third-world-9781350268159/>.

This open-access book analyzes how the Global South reimagined the postwar international order and the cultural and intellectual breakthroughs generated by these alternative visions. The end of the Second World War and the weakening of empires sparked broad efforts to redefine the contours of global power. Through essays that explore debates in diplomacy, culture, and intellectual history, it shows how Southern actors sought alternative world orders beyond Western Cold War binaries.

Gordon, R. E. (2022). *Development Disrupted: The Global South in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108539876>.

This book offers a contemporary analytical framework for thinking about the Global South within global economic, legal, and political orders. Gordon traces how development discourse has evolved and situates technological transformations (digital platforms, mobile technologies, industrial shifts) as both opportunities and disruptions in the South's pathways. It bridges historical and current debates on development and repositions the Global South as a dynamic, heterogeneous set of actors rather than a residual category in global hierarchies.

Woertz, E. (Ed.) (2017). *Reconfiguration of the Global South Africa and Latin America and the 'Asian Century'*. Routledge: London and NY. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315457659>.

This book examines how shifting global power towards Asia (especially China and India) influences political-economic dynamics in Africa and Latin America. Contributors consider trade, investment, industrialization, and South–South cooperation in the context of new global alignments, offering empirical case studies as well as conceptual debates about the changing structure of the global economy.

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