Jean K. Chalaby, **Television in the Streaming Era: The Global Shift**, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2023, 251 pp., $34.99 (paperback).

Reviewed by
Taeyoung Kim
Loughborough University

The rise of streaming platforms has disrupted many theoretical frameworks widely used in international communication. Their emergence in many markets worldwide has not only restructured the fundamentals of media industries but also transformed the forms, genres, and production mechanisms of films and television. In this regard, Jean K. Chalaby, in the book *Television in the Streaming Era: The Global Shift*, explores how streaming media changes the industry.

The book consists of 13 chapters. The first few chapters briefly overview major discussions in international communication. Then, the author emphasizes the blurred boundaries between countries due to a handful of factors like digital technologies and migration, which require a paradigm shift in studying international communication. In this regard, the author suggests the global value chain (GVC), which refers to "sets of interorganizational networks clustered around one commodity or product, linking households, enterprises, and states to one another within the world-economy" (p. 18), a concept that has been widely used in economics and political science to explore the complex relations among different actors comprising the global economy. Using GVC, the author further develops how the concept helps explain the market integration of global television by shedding light on how digitization disrupted the television industry. According to the author, the impact of digitization on television's production and delivery mechanisms also prompted tech companies to enter the business. With this, the author introduces the conglomeration of U.S. media giants and how new players disintegrate this business model by outsourcing content production to domestic companies and introducing a more flexible production system thanks to their financial and technological advantages. While acknowledging the dominance of the United States in the market, the author also introduces the growing presence of formats and series produced outside of the United States in the global market, as well as a handful of non-U.S. regional and global news networks.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on the technological elements of streaming platforms and explore different business strategies that major streaming platforms seek in the industry. The fourth chapter begins by introducing how new technologies have innovated media. Then, it explains how streaming technologies expand the economy of scale of television and categorize different streaming operators based on their business models as platforms. In the meantime, the fifth chapter further delves into the symbiotic
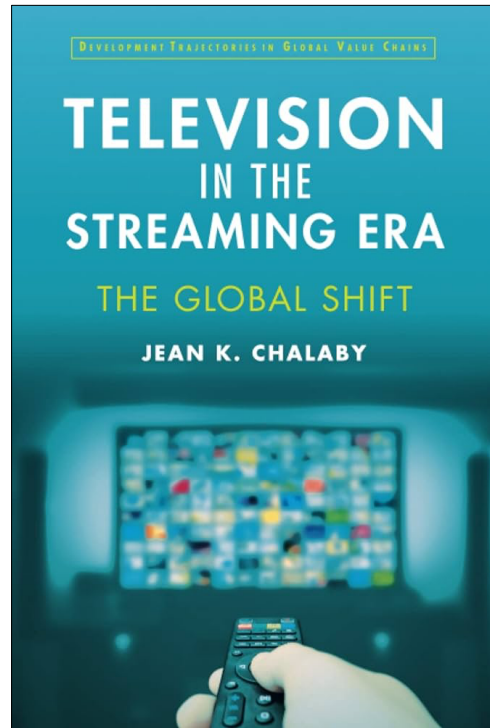
relationship between media and technologies and articulates how new technologies transform television, which once was considered a national medium, into a continental (i.e., European) and global medium, thanks to satellites, content delivery networks, and later on, clouds. Finally, the sixth chapter explains how cloud centers have become the key infrastructure facilitating the streaming platform's penetration into different markets worldwide and constructing a new media ecosystem.

The final chapters explore the changing nature of the traditional distinction of media production, distribution, and aggregation when streaming media becomes more prominent in the television landscape. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 conceptualize every state of content production, distribution, and aggregation and how globalization influences these stages. They also introduce more details on the conglomeration of media companies seeking an economy of scale. Then, they explore how new technologies introduce new delivery methods of content, from videocassette recorders (VCR) to livestreaming, and how such a complicated ecosystem makes television networks outsource their delivery activities to other actors, including tech companies. Then, chapter 10 introduces how such a shift matters to the business structure of media companies, while chapter 11 argues for introducing new policy frameworks for regulating streaming platforms.

Among the many valuable insights the author shares throughout the book, I believe the author's most significant contribution is threefold. First, as the title indicates, the volume offers a comprehensive analysis of the impact of digitization on the television industry. By introducing GVC, the book explores the complex global television network of foreign streaming giants, global/regional/domestic/local television networks, and production studios that interact with each other regardless of terrestrial boundaries. Moreover, it offers a comprehensive overview of the distinctive characteristics of cultural industries, not limited to television, and how digitization, as well as the entry of tech giants into television production and the penetration of digital infrastructures, interrupt them. Third, reflecting on the author's years of studying international communication, the book critically historizes international communication, reviews major theoretical foundations of the field, and asks questions about how to understand the changes brought by digitization and the advent of new players in media production. The book is useful not only for students and researchers of television studies but also for media industry studies scholars interested in studying the distinctive characteristics of media industries and the globalization of television.

After reading the author's insightful thoughts, I became more curious about how the author's GVC framework works in the television industry when Netflix, Disney+, and a few other U.S.-based streaming giants penetrate the local media ecosystem. This is because their entry not only disrupts the business model of a handful of incumbent major players in the television landscape worldwide but also changes the way audiences consume content and the business strategies of stakeholders in domestic and traditional television (Lobato, 2019). As much of the book is about the history of the globalization of television, it becomes more crucial to examine how local stakeholders have become more incorporated into the global value chain and how they recognize those who trigger such changes—global streaming and tech giants. While it is evident that the power of U.S. streamers and platform companies is prominent in the local ecosystem, many incumbent players collaborate with those global giants and compete and hold them in check. Many audiences consume local content via traditional television outlets and domestic streaming platforms that target their domestic markets only. In this regard, it would be helpful to know

how local companies, producers, artists, and creators—who had been outside of the previous tides of the media conglomeration—became part of the streaming and tech companies' value chain: what their motivations are and how they change their content creation strategies (Afilipoaie, Iordache, & Raats, 2021; Kim, 2022).

Another thing is that while the author assumes that forces and tenets of globalization, like digital technologies, migration, and market integration, blur the traditional boundaries between countries and intensify globalization, national (and local) televisions and the state should not be underestimated. This is because television is still a critical ideological apparatus serving the state's political-economic interests and functions as an essential medium for the domestic population (and their global diasporas) representing their culture (Gellner, 2006). While the state's measures on global forces are often admittedly responsive and passive to technological changes, they still retain the power and have various regulatory methods to interrupt foreign streaming giants to secure the interests of domestic stakeholders. Indeed, regulatory bodies of many countries, such as Australia, Canada, and France, have pressured streaming moguls to reinvest much of their revenue in producing domestic content, while South Korea encourages domestic streamers to compete against them (Schnitzer, 2019; Vlassis, 2023). Furthermore, some domestic competitors refuse to join the global value chain led by streaming giants, as exemplified when Catherine Tait, the CEO of CBC, the Canadian public broadcaster, announced the broadcaster's suspension of future collaboration with Netflix, criticizing the streaming giant "as the beginning of new empire" (Marquis, 2019). Since national governments play crucial roles in resetting borders within digital spaces (Tawil-Souri, 2015), all this implies that the new television ecosystem restructured by U.S. streaming platforms and their global business networks are still multifaceted, which should be further discussed. Given the author's insightful introduction of GVC to study the changing dynamics of television in the streaming era, more follow-up research on how local stakeholders situate themselves in this chain would be beneficial.

References

Afilipoaie, A., Iordache, C., & Raats, T. (2021). The "Netflix Original" and what it means for the production of European television content. *Critical Studies in Television*, *16*(3), 304–325.

Kim, T. (2022). Cultural politics of Netflix in local contexts: A case of the Korean media industries. *Media, Culture & Society*, *44*(8), 1508–1522. doi:10.1177/01634437221111917

Lobato, R. (2019). *Netflix nations: The geography of digital distribution*. New York: New York University Press.

Marquis, M. (2019, January 31). CBC president draws parallel between Netflix empire and imperialism. *Global News*. Retrieved from https://globalnews.ca/news/4912513/cbc-president-netflix-imperialism/

Schnitzer, B. (2019). Netflix: Canadian (dis)content: Competing sovereignties and the cultural politics of cultural policy. *American Review of Canadian Studies*, *49*(1), 85–104. doi:10.1080/02722011.2019.1572205

Tawil-Souri, H. (2015). Cellular borders: Dis/connecting phone calls in Israel-Palestine. In L. Parks & N. Starosielski (Eds.), *Signal traffic: Critical studies of media infrastructures* (pp. 157–180). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Vlassis, A. (2023). *Regulating Netflix: A cross-national momentum?* Retrieved from https://policyreview.info/articles/news/regulating-netflix-cross-national-momentum/1706