

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q20

What are the aims and objectives of the McBride Commission of the UNESCO? What is India's position on these?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · GS II · 12 marks · India and its Neighbourhood

India and its neighborhood - relations.

Core demand of the question

- What are the aims and objectives of the **McBride Commission** of the UNESCO? What is India's position on these?

Revision summary

The **McBride Commission** (1977-80) studied global communication problems for UNESCO and reported as **Many Voices, One World**.

- **It aimed at a New World Information and Communication Order:** less North-South news imbalance, stronger Southern media, cultural plurality, and a right to communicate.

India backed **NWICO** and public communication capacity in NAM and UNESCO.

India did not accept **NWICO** as state censorship; **Article 19(1)(a)** and a private press remained the domestic line.

India stayed in UNESCO after the US and UK withdrawals over **NWICO**.

Introduction

The **McBride Commission** was UNESCO's **International Commission** for the Study of Communication Problems, set up in 1977 and chaired by **Sean MacBride** of Ireland. It reported in 1980 as **Many Voices, One World**. Its aims grew from the Non-Aligned demand for a New World Information and Communication Order (**NWICO**): a fairer global flow of news, against a one-way stream from a few Western agencies. India, as a NAM voice and a large democracy with a free press tradition, backed the equity aims and rejected any reading that would licence official censorship.

Body

Why UNESCO created the Commission

- In the 1970s, four or five Western news agencies and a handful of satellite and advertising systems dominated what the world read about the South.
- **Developing countries argued that this was cultural dependence after political independence:** coups, famines and 'instability' were the only stories, while their development efforts were invisible.
- UNESCO, under a majority of developing members, asked a commission of journalists, scholars and public figures to study the imbalance and to recommend a more just and efficient world information order.

Aims and objectives (Many Voices, One World**)**

- To study the totality of communication problems in the modern world - news, broadcasting, satellites, transborder data, and the right to communicate - not only press freedom as defined in one capital.
- To reduce the imbalance in the flow of news between North and South, and among regions, so that developing countries are sources of news, not only objects of news.
- **To strengthen national communication systems:** news agencies, broadcasting, telecommunication, and training of journalists in the South, including through public investment where the market would not build them.
- To defend cultural identity and plurality against homogenising commercial content, while still honouring the free flow of ideas.
- **To treat communication as a human right:** access, participation, and a two-way flow, including the rural poor and women, not only urban elites.
- To promote a New World Information and Communication Order as a counterpart to the New International Economic Order: less monopoly, more diversity of sources, and fairer use of the electromagnetic spectrum and satellite slots.
- To improve professional ethics, limit concentration of media ownership, and caution against reducing all information to a commodity.
- To ask UNESCO and states to help with technology transfer, reduced tariffs on communication equipment, and protection of journalists - without making the journalist a state clerk.

India's position

- India supported **NWICO** and the McBride diagnosis in NAM and UNESCO forums. It knew the cost of a one-way Reuters-AFP-AP picture of the subcontinent.
- India backed public-service broadcasting (All India Radio, later Doordarshan) and a national news agency tradition (PTI, UNI) as tools of development communication, which fitted McBride's call to build Southern capacity.
- India did not read McBride as a licence for prior censorship or for a single government newspaper. The Indian Constitution's **Article 19(1)(a)**, with reasonable restrictions, and a combative private press, set a red line: equity of flow is not the same as state monopoly of truth.
- India stayed in UNESCO when the **United States (1984)** and the **United Kingdom (1985)** left, accusing UNESCO of politicising the press and of **NWICO**. New Delhi treated that walk-out as a defence of old monopolies, not as a defence of liberty alone.
- At the same time, Indian editors and the Supreme Court's later expansion of press and speech rights kept India from the extreme of some one-party states that used **NWICO** language to muzzle dissent.
- **Practical Indian line:** more voices from the South, South-South news exchange, development-oriented communication, community radio and later digital access - and a free press that can criticise the Indian State itself.
- After the Cold War, UNESCO's emphasis shifted toward press freedom days and safety of journalists. India can still use McBride's unfulfilled bits: plurality of ownership, linguistic diversity, and cheap access for the poor, now in a digital platform market that repeats some of the old one-way power.

A tight join

- McBride's aim was many voices, not one official voice. India's position is to agree with the many-voices aim and to refuse the one-official-voice distortion.

Flow diagram

UNESCO 1977 -> McBride Commission
McBride Commission -> Many Voices One World 1980
Many Voices One World 1980 -> NWICO balanced flow plurality
NWICO balanced flow plurality -> India supports equity
India supports equity -> Rejects censorship keeps Art 19

Conclusion

The **McBride Commission** aimed at a more balanced, plural and development-friendly world information order: Southern news capacity, cultural diversity, the right to communicate, and less monopoly in global news. India supported those aims in UNESCO and NAM, built public communication capacity, and stayed when Western members walked out - while insisting that **NWICO** cannot mean censorship. That double position still fits a democracy that wants both a free press and a fairer global microphone.

Facts & figures

Sean MacBride

Irish statesman and Nobel Peace Prize laureate who chaired **UNESCO's International Commission** for the Study of Communication Problems.

Many Voices, One World (1980)

The Commission's report; the main text of what is called the McBride Report.

NWICO

New World Information and Communication Order, the NAM-era demand for a fairer global news and communication system.

US and UK UNESCO withdrawals

The United States left UNESCO in 1984 and the United Kingdom in 1985, citing NWICO and politicisation; both later returned in other years.

Article 19(1)(a)

Indian constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and expression, which frames India's refusal to turn McBride into official media monopoly.