



News and information trends in the North and South:

A historical and sceptical orientation

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Abstract

The article presents a broad sweep of the centrality of news as information necessary in the making of 'the nation'. It highlights important facets in the works of media sociologists since the 1920s to the 1940s in American society, and how this thread of Anglo-American journalism has become the yardstick globally in the work of journalists, editors and 'news workers'. The article traces the historical and political economic development of the New World Order emerging from socio-economic and political relations spawned post-WWII, resulting in a globalised world with the unintended consequence of an asymmetrical global-*North* and global-*South*. However, neither the so-called *North* nor *South* are homogenous entities, which makes modern 21st century news-telling dynamic and in full flux. From the historical overview, the article then delineates the globalisation of news in the emergence of new information and communication technologies of the late-20th century, and an advancing more open, yet unequal world of those with access to information and news and those lagging behind in access due largely, in part, to economic exclusion. Finally, the paper presents an up-to-date account of news in the diverse South and North in a neo-imperialist global world.

Keywords: Globalisation of news, information flows, political economy, media sociology, neo-imperialism, global capitalism.

Introduction

The idea for this paper is a culmination of my ongoing interest in the area of research specialisation in the sociology of the mass media and a re-visitation of relevant and related studies over several decades on the precarious relationship of news flows in the North and in the South. Specifically, the paper focuses on news trends in the North and the South and offers a 'theo-retro-sophical' argument from a sceptical vantage point. My argument for why news presents an important area for study relates to the fact that it is critical information in the life of any civil society and nation-state because, as Anderson (1983) suggested, news shapes the national mind and vice versa. News also informs and educates. It can also become a mechanism for manipulation and control or for persuasion as seen in early studies by Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton (1948), Walter Lippman (1922), and later by Herman and Chomsky (1994, 2002). It is very much a barometer of human social, political and economic behaviour and a yardstick for social relations spread across the world between nations and states. It speaks of limits to freedom and visions about the future prospects for life on earth (cf. Marais 2001), within nations, and among neighbours. Such is the nature of news. It is also a product of global economic relations (cf. Jansen 2010) and it can facilitate relationships of power and dominance (see Schiller 1976, 1992). Another aspect of the paper attempts to argue for the 'lost purpose' of news in democracies and focuses therefore on the work of 'news makers' –

journalists (cf. Golding & Elliot 1979, and Tuchman 1978).

In the paper I seek to propose, and briefly discuss, the following broad questions:

- 1) *What are the guiding principles and norms that define an event as 'news'? In this regard, how do journalists and editors operate in the selection, editing and choice of news stories with reference to gate-keeping, for instance?*
- 2) *How is news and events defined and framed within the context of the North and South and influential to globalisation of news?*
- 3) *What are the trends or patterns that one can highlight as giving rise to inconsistencies in news flow and information dissemination, globally?*

What are the guiding principles and norms that define an event as 'news'? The work of journalists and editors

A commonsense definition of news is that it is *information* that is conveyed by instruments of mass media including newspapers, radio, television, magazines, and the internet, which tells us about everyday events happening around us and to us. There is an underlying problem in this commonsense view in that there is the assumption that news presents an objective and impartial worldview. In other words, the assumption is that news conveys a reality just as it is. The objectivity purpose of news is that it reflects 'the truth' about the social. Truth, in turn, implies that an objective reality exists and that the news purports to report that reality irrespective of personal feelings and the opinions of those who bring us the news – news reporters/journalists, editors and anchors. Again, for argument's sake, unless we have experienced an event first-hand as witness to it, we cannot claim that what we receive is 'the truth'.

This is not to say that media personnel lie or make up stories about events, but that, as Baudrillard (1981, 1994, and 1991) asked, what is to say that we ordinary citizens do not receive 'simulacra' of events? Or a representation of something – not as it is, but as it is perceived to be. When we speak of the notion of 'truths', we enter into the realm of normative ethics

and value judgments. We then attribute to the object and news, an epistemological underpinning where news becomes a form of knowledge specifically in the story form being disseminated to the public or citizenry, or when its target is a specific interest group. Herman and Chomsky (1994) referred to the dissemination of information and the role of the mass media in the US for instance, as 'manufacturing consent', a term they adopted from the journalist, Walter Lippmann who was writing in the 1920s about the function of journalism in the USA becoming an instrument of government manipulation. Lippmann (in Graber 1990: 37 quoting Lippmann) expounded the view that 'journalists point a flashlight rather than a mirror at the world [and as a result] the audience does not receive a complete image of the political scene; it gets a highly selective series of glimpses instead'. This allows the same image to be interpreted quite differently resulting in misinterpretations or confusion.

The communication specialist, Keval Kumar (2004: 54-55), defines news as '... *the account* of an event, not something intrinsic in the event itself. There is nothing in the event itself that makes it news; the event is not the news'. In other words, an event only becomes news when it is constructed in a specific format, selected according to a professional value system and then presented as a news report (ibid. op cit.). It is the final product of an elaborate process which begins systematically with selecting and sorting events 'according to socially constructed categories within cultural discourses' (Kumar 2004: 55). Like Anderson (1983), Kumar holds the view that news takes on a very distinct story form depending on the social context from which it is constructed and conveyed, and therefore, the situation of news reporting becomes even more interesting when viewed from the vantage of the global or international context. Patterns can be seen to emerge and these observable trends call into question the views of journalists about their craft being impartial, balanced and objective.

Kumar (2004) makes an important distinction between 'information' and 'communication'. The English word, communication, he says, is derived from the Latin verb, '*communicare*' which means '*to make*

common' (own italics). He believes that communication facilitates human relationships, which involves two or more people who come together to share in dialogue and to commune, or just be together. He attributes with it the same importance as the basic needs of food and water in human survival. 'Halt communication', he says, 'and the life processes wither and die' (ibid. 2004: 3). He gives the example of a festival or a ceremony as events which facilitate communication (Kumar 2004: 1) and, equally, a political rally (social movements) too can qualify. On the other hand, he describes information as a unilinear process involving a sender, the message, and a receiver. Unlike dynamic communication which involves dialogue, or a two-way process that is relatively reciprocal and is something shared, 'information', he says, 'being unilinear is made up of bits of messages, verbal and non-verbal from a specific source [and] when the exchange of information is made on an unequal or commercial basis, it leads to [relations of domination] on the one hand, and the [commodification of information on the other]' (Kumar 2004: 5-6).

In this sense, news is an important area of study in that it involves both information and communication – shared knowledge, shared ideas, beliefs and opinions about the world we live in – but it is predominantly a one-way flow of information from a source to the receiving audience with little room or time for feedback (particularly newspaper and televised broadcasts). News is fundamentally a cultural construct and it has taken an important place in modern societies. But, like other culturally constructed phenomena such as language, religion and dress code, it is also open to contestation and is a cause as well as a remedy for social exclusions and inclusions. For instance, a lack of shared information and knowledge results in ignorance and exclusion and it lead to unequal power relations. But access to news creates informed and knowledgeable citizens and empowers the individual to participate in decision-making and exercising choice. In modern societies, news interest has become especially limited to elite groups.

Kumar (2004:5) also makes us aware that a lack of information and too much of information are both equally disorientating and harmful to social absorp-

tion and understanding. He uses the example of the 'information explosion' brought about by modern technologies such as the internet and satellite television, which results in an attention overload in taking in too much information. In the 1940s, sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton (1948: 105-6) were already concerned about the usage of media in the United States and they developed a conceptual phrase describing an effect of information-overload or dumbing down of the populace – viz. 'the *narcotizing effect*' (own italics). They say it has a 'narcotising dysfunction' on the public which is a consequence of being flooded by loads of information that gets recycled and repeated over and over again and this renders society largely 'apathetic and inert'. Furthermore, they add: 'In this way ... mass media are among the most respectable and efficient of social narcotics, and increasing dosages may be transforming [civil societies] energies from active participation to passive knowledge' (quoted in Severin & Tankard 1991: 300-301). In other words, similar to a drug induced state, too much information creates an uncritical, unthinking and passive civil society, which is unable to cognitively manage or process all this information.

A similar argument is made by Thussu (1998: 1) where he states that the general trend of too much information is leading increasingly to the 'de-politicisation and atomisation of consumers of media products'. To add to these arguments, is the question of quality and content of information and news flows which in an age of globalisation must be held both questionable and accountable, not only in terms of the quality and content, but also with regard to who controls and decides how news is framed and what events are significant to be selected as 'news'.

To retrace my steps then, let me summarise by saying what news is, and what it is not:

- News is not the 'truth'. It is but a representation of truth bearing in mind that it is therefore open to subjective interpretation.
- News is information but it is not neutral in that it offers an opinion, it constructs an image from reality and frames topics and discourses within specific cultural and value paradigms.

- News is a form of communication in that it has an effect on our opinions, our judgements and beliefs. It is therefore value-laden. I would add here, that through the modern instruments of media such as radio, newspapers, and internet sites, there is the possibility of feedback from audiences in the form of dialogue. But this is still limited to and controlled by editorial staff, hence, this communication remains asymmetrical.
- News is time-bound, meaning that events are selected as news on a particular day and yesterday's news reports become tomorrow's history or archival material. It therefore presents an ever-changing picture of daily events, adding to the information overload. Except in rare instances of in-depth journalism where time is extended on a given news item or an event, then follow-up reports reconstruct a story. For example, in South Africa, the recent court case of the Oscar Pistorius trial presents an in-depth investigative news story. Then a series of news articles pertaining to the one event is spread over several weeks or months.
- News is sensational and attention-grabbing and in this sense it caters to very specific audiences and social groups.

How news and events came to be defined and framed within the context of the North and South

An important and significant event in modern history is relevant here. It is relevant because one can argue that this and other socio-political events propelled a 'new world' and peace accord, and set global development and relations among nations, on a new road. It also staged the setting for the emergence of a new phase of globalisation politics and economics. When information flows and news exchanges became heated debates at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the start of the globalisation-rhetoric started gaining significance within this same period of the post-Second World War, an important conference was held, led by the alliance, Britain, the United States, and smaller contingents, at Bretton Woods in the State of New Hampshire, USA, on July 1944 (Peet 2003: 27). Fac-

ing a global depression brought about by the war, forty-four countries met to negotiate, plan and implement a programme by which they would 'shape and control their (sic) economic relations' (Van Dormael 1978: ix) and 'secure world peace through international economic cooperation' (Peet 2003: 27). According to Peet (*ibid.*), '[t]he principal method used to achieve this end was the restoration of orderly exchanges between member countries [and the Conference adopted the slogan]: 'stability without rigidity and elasticity without looseness', referring to the forging of international economic relations (Van Dormael 1978: ix) that would set the world on a new international economic order.

Out of the Bretton Woods Conference, two permanent international institutions emerged - the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - and each was given considerable powers and resources to deal with monetary and economic matters on behalf of and among nation-states (Van Dormael 1978: 2). The chief function of the IMF would be 'to assure stability of exchange rates and orderly adjustment when this became necessary' within member states while the main purpose of the WB is to 'provide credit to war torn nations in order to permit them to rebuild their economies' (Van Dormael 1978: 2-3). A General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) was also set up within the parameters of this meeting. GATT is now known as the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In short, the Bretton Woods event marked the beginning of a new era referred to as the New World Order, which was meant to bring about reconstruction of economies, peace and stability through international economic cooperation and prosperity. Inadvertently, however, it rather resulted in the rise of an unequal world order of international trade and global exchange and as Harry Magdoff (2002) and others (Thussu 1998, Thussu & Freedman 2003, Peet 2003, McMurtry 2002 and Pilger 2002) have put it, it led instead to a neo-imperialist and unfettered global capitalist system. In communication terms, it divided the world into a North and a South - or a 'sender' and a 'receiver'.

Significantly, Bretton Woods also marked the

onset of increased and heightened global communication, information flows, and news exchanges. World leaders from every nation on every continent were present or represented at the Conference. More importantly, however, the rhetoric of a New World Economic Order (NWEO), born out of Bretton Woods, became the framework from within which global information flows and news exchanges would (and are) function/ing. As a precursor, perhaps, of things to come, the World Bank in one of its working papers (2004: 1) describes the current global social order as a '*...global economy moving into a digital age where information has become the primary resource for economic development*' (own italics).

Lastly, but more important to the present paper, the world stage for future communications was set not only by framing of a New World Economic Order, but also by the articulation of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) emanating from the international organisation, UNESCO. The failure of the League of Nations in the earlier part of the 20th century and birth of a United Nations Council embraced and provided a global platform for the NWEO, and was in contrast to the global information order, the NWICO, which was derived from alliances between developing member states at UNESCO, namely, the then Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (see Boyd-Barrett 1980, Thussu 1998, Kumar 2004).

Proposals for a NWICO came in the late 1970s and early 1980s within UNESCO predominantly from colonised and developing nations of Africa, Asia and South America who coalesced under the rubric of the Non-Aligned Movement (Kumar 2004: 112-119). Their central purpose was to oppose the unfair and unbalanced flow of news and information that they perceived was largely managed, controlled and disseminated via the media institutions of developed nations and the transnational news agencies, including Reuters, Associated Press (AP), and the Agence France Presse (AFP) (Boyd-Barrett 1980), with headquarters in the West. The NAM questioned the nature, content and quality of this information especially when it was about the Third World. Kumar (2004:118-119) states:

...[international] news about the South is gathered and processed by Western journalists who have little understanding of the culture and social and political ethos of developing countries. The result is that the 'images' of the developing countries thus disseminated are distorted, with emphasis on poverty, famines, floods, and other disasters and *coup d'état*—generally presented as 'exceptional' events without a context. Thus, the philosophy of news espoused by the transnationals ... is alien to the philosophy of non-aligned countries which see news as a developmental process, as fulfilling social, political, economic and cultural needs.

The Non-Aligned Movement in 1973 endorsed a recommendation at UNESCO for the establishing of a Non-aligned News Agencies Pool (NANAP) to compensate for the shortcomings and imbalances in the existing international flows of news and information dissemination to developing countries (Boyd-Barrett 1980:13). Similar petitions followed in 1976 and 1978 which, had they been accepted would have seen the control of governments of all news moving in and out of their territories. This led to such a furore at UNESCO from the developed nations especially by the US and UK and it was withdrawn on the basis of their argument that it would impede freedom of speech and freedom to information (Boyd-Barrett 1980:13).

UNESCO has a long history of dissatisfaction with the state of global information flows voiced specifically by the developing world nations. The NAM was formed in 1961 on the basis of this as well as the bi-polar nature of information flows created between the 'power blocs' of Eastern Europe and the West during the Cold War. In May 1963, the independent nations of the African continent formed the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) revamped as the African Union (AU) in February 2004 (see <http://www.germanlawjournal.com/article.php?id=173>). In 1965, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed (Kumar 2004: 113). These bodies registered dissatisfaction with the global information climate particularly the monopolisation of global information by the transnational news agencies serving the emergent North. These non-aligned nations banded together also to oppose the international economic order which offered unequal and

unfair trade advantages to the West; 'They argued that 'free trade' was in reality a one-way trade, from North to South, and 'free-flow' of information likewise was regarded as a one-way flow of news and information, again from North to South' (Kumar 2004: 114).

Taking all this into consideration, it was the responsibility of UNESCO to address these real concerns and frustrations of the South. This led UNESCO to setting up an international commission of enquiry in 1977 headed by the Irish diplomat, Sean MacBride (Kumar 2004: 116). The MacBride Commission's final report, published under the title *One Voice, Many Nations* in 1980, became one of the most prominent and controversial reports concerning the global communication network. The report itself was uneven in style given the various national and ideological backgrounds of the members on the commission. Kumar notes (2004:117):

The Report gives a full airing to the many complaints of the non-aligned nations about the defects in the prevailing system of international news flow, such as the general neglect of news of the summit conferences and other activities of the non-aligned movement (Mulay 1987). On the one hand, it does not neglect to present Western fear, (...) while [on the other hand] seeing some problems in the kinds of news distributed by the transnational agencies [resulting in] deficiencies that are offset by a 'growing capacity in developing countries to make *appropriate* critical selection of news coming from abroad' (Mulay 1987:146).

He says that '[a]lthough many disparities between developed and non-aligned countries still exist, and many basic issues in the debate have not been resolved, other authorities claim that it promoted some improvements in the coverage of non-aligned countries by Western media' (ibid. 2004: 117-118).

This scenario has been altered considerably with the process of globalisation in which barriers to communication have long been superseded, and the latest technological instruments have altered the face of global information flow. However, the historical paving of this path is an important reference to what has and will emerge in decades to come, in this 21st century. There is still the persistence of framing news

in a particular way, as well as a lack of access in an age of global democracy by large majorities of the developing world that is still to be addressed, if not by nation-states or the global organisations such as UNESCO, then by citizens themselves. Hence, the globalisation involved in news flow has introduced further anomalies for the developing world nations in the form of lack of access to modern technologies and inequitable access to information which is still available to pockets of elite groups around the world.

Current Trends in News and Information Flow: A historical political economy approach

One of the main attributes of globalisation as well as a related feature in its ushering in is the opening up of global communication and information networks catering for a 'free', but unequal, flow of information and news exchange across continents. The trajectory of my argument began with the postulation that the logic underlying an emerging global media trend is based primarily on the rhetoric and actions of those transnational media corporations (TNMCs) representing the North with some strategic mergers and partnerships are emerging in the South (BRICS, for instance). These TNMCs call for a free flow of information to justify their economic and cultural dominance and their influence over media products globally. The view/or vision that they expound is set in a global market capitalism and a neo-liberal form of development, beneficial only to societies 'plugged in' and with access. Another consequence is that global market capitalism is a main attributor of inherent social class inequalities particularly in nations that still rely heavily on agricultural and raw material production and export. There continues to be a predominantly one-way flow of technology and media products from the North to the South. The logic of these TNMCs further reinforce the belief that unequal access to information and the discrepancies between the rich and poor is a normal occurrence and based on the rationality of the world system, which itself is based on free and open competition. How they manage to maintain this logic is through the

construction of a North-South discourse (previously it was First World – Third World), and in which global news is framed within this discourse. This naturalisation of the world, especially seen in televised news images is then taken as the inevitable and inherently unchanging reality.

The most current literature on global news and information flow presents a clearer demarcation in trends in terms of the amount of information relayed, access to, and control over information across nations as well as within nations (see Jansen 2010, cf. Thussu and Freedman 2003, Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998, and Boyd-Barrett & Thussu 1992). In comparing the situation of news development in the North and South, Kumar (2004) believes that the function of information has always had a different purpose in both of these contexts. Kumar (2004: 17-21, 22-24, 26, 43) points out that the use of media in the West underwent transformations from primarily functioning to persuade and influence, to surveillance, and then to normative prescription for conduct in the overall transmission of Western culture. This resulted in information flow adopting a 'public relations' format in Western-based media. In the South, the ambition was with 'communication for development'. Theorists like Herman and Chomsky (1994), and Herbert Schiller (1992) attest to this on the basis of empirical and theoretical observation. Herman and Chomsky (2002) most formidably characterise Western media with a propaganda function in its response to serving the interests of global market capitalism, and or big business and or the state. As a result, many theorists have argued that Western audiences have largely become depoliticised.

Media in the South contexts, however, as reported by Kumar (2004) has developed, after independence, primarily to serve in nation-building and overall development as in the cases of Asia and Africa. In South America, the media have focussed furthermore on mass liberation from dependency and imitation of Western values in self-empowerment programmes and through a process of conscientisation, a term adopted from the educationalist, Paulo Freire (Kumar 2004: 43). A spate of articles comparing the North's and South's framing of news, such as Shelton Gu-

naratne, Kunda Dixit, Pran Chopra, and Robert White, amongst others (Kumar 2004: 56-57) take up the developmental and participatory themes of news flows in the South under the framework of 'alternative approaches', as opposed to the North's focus on the 'public relations' model.

An 'alternative approach' includes emphasis on 'participatory communication', 'communication for liberation', 'conscientisation', 'self-empowerment' and development (ibid. 2004: 21). Furthermore, he states that in African and Asian countries the media, especially the broadcast media which are owned and managed by the state, have focussed on forging unity through democracy, or on national development, and geared their programmes towards educational themes (ibid. 2004: 50). Having to compete with the public relations format that has largely been advanced in the South by Western media corporations has resulted in a constant tension between these two formats.

The public relations model is based primarily on the commodification of information and the main purpose of information is profit motivated, and to increase ratings and advertising revenues. This format has increasingly encroached on the freedom and space of the alternative media format of South nations. Thussu (1998) for instance speaks of the commodification of news through 'infotainment', that is, a 'tendency to dilute news content and make it more like entertainment, accessible to a heterogeneous audience; that is, making it globalised infotainment' (Thussu 1998: 70). Because of the emphasis in this media format on boosting ratings and profits, reporting on foreign news, according to Thussu (1998) and Utley (1997) becomes expendable, 'unless it is of compelling interest to a mass audience' (Thussu 1998: 71). This process of 'infotainment' has been carried over from the metropolitan centres of the West through globalisation (through the free flow of information rhetoric) to the rest of the world.

In South America where media is predominantly privately owned the format for news production historically varied considerably from the 'public relations' format of Western media. However, as a result of transnational corporations encroaching upon the audiences there, the local media companies have had to

resort to forced competition with these media giants, or they have had to forge agreements or partnerships, so as not to lose their audiences and the cultural ethos of their productions. Though ultimately, these are lost in the Westernisation of the local. Thussu (1998: 69-70) for instance, reports that the Central News Network (CNN) owned by Ted Turner Corporations adopted a regionalist strategy by launching a twenty-four-hour Spanish news network for South American audiences which is broadcast via satellite from its headquarters in Atlanta. Furthermore, News Corporation, owned by the media tycoon, Rupert Murdoch entered into an agreement with Brazil's Globo and Mexico's Televisa to provide an array of direct satellite channels to South America. Quoting Thussu, he says that 'Murdoch hopes potentially to have a market of 400 million people to make his empire truly global' (Thussu 1998: 70).

A common feature in the developing nations' media institutions, however, is the continued reliance on the advanced industrialised nations both for resources and training (Kumar 2004: 50, 117-118). Hence, in the complex global relationship of media a dependency relationship still exists. The picture is rather complex and varies if the media in South nations are privatised and commercially owned because the trend is increased competition for mass audiences, treating them as consumers of information, as commodities. Commodification of information ultimately means turning information into something that will sell and increase profits. Thus, the most sensational issues and events are framed as news and aimed primarily at largest (consumer) audiences of that media. Thussu (1998: 1) very aptly describes the globalisation of information (that is, the apparent opening up of media markets) as a 'colonising [of] the imagination' of consumers of these products through persuasion and seduction.

In the late twentieth century, global changes in ownership patterns of media because of mergers and take-overs by multimedia corporations reflect an overwhelming homogenisation of news (Croteau & Hoynes 2001). Given that South-based media institutions are still overwhelmingly dependent on Anglo-American news sources for raw footage, news items

and pictures, as also found in a study by Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998) and in Thussu (1998), they help support a global news agenda. 'The broadcasters [for instance] in Asia use the same footage as their counterparts in [South] America and Africa – supplied by Western television news agencies' (Thussu 1998: 73). Pick up any English medium newspaper in any of the South contexts and turn to the international news pages, at the end of every printed article you are most likely to find the acronyms, AP (Associated Press), AFP (Agence France Presse), or Reuters. Very rarely will information and pictures reflect the local news agency.

Authors like McChesney (1998), Croteau and Hoynes (2001), Magdoff (2002) and Thussu and Freedman (2003), Chomsky (2003) and Pilger (2002) caution that the globalisation process may appear to promote 'freedom' and 'democracy', but the elements of subtle control, manipulation, in short, a neo-imperialist agenda may be at work to preserve global relations of economic power and dominance; 'colonising the imagination' as Thussu (mentioned above) calls it. Furthermore, he states that nearly two decades of neo-liberal policies of deregulation and privatisation pursued aggressively by the WB and the IMF together with improvements and expansion in media technologies, especially satellites, have 'enabled the globalisation of media markets and given free reign to mainly Western-based media conglomerates to become truly global in their operations' (Thussu 1998: 63).

In other parallel findings, Bornman et al (2001: 177)^a offer further description and reiteration of news and information flow in North and South contexts, taking into consideration a comparison between the More Developed Countries (MDCs) and Less Developed Countries (LDCs) of the South in relation to the North. They list several key factors that characterise the present-day flow of international news:

The largest proportion of news items reported in the world every day comes from the centre [North]. In other words, news from the centre [North] dominates news coverage worldwide. In addition, there is a greater discrepancy in the ratio of news exchanged among countries (...). This implies that there is a far

more equal relationship in the exchange of news between countries at the centre [of the North] than in the exchange between centre [North] and periphery [South]. News from Western countries make up a larger proportion of the news content of countries of the periphery (South), there is little or no exchange of news between peripheral (South) countries and, more news is exchanged between countries at the centre (North) and more developed countries (MDCs in the South), than between the centre (North) and less developed countries (LDCs of the South). This could mean that the MDCs of the South act as intermediaries between the North and the LDCs of the South. This present picture of international news flow depicts a bleak past and an even bleaker future if something is not done to address the issues sufficiently well.^b

What the above trends allude to is that the global media conglomerates located in Western countries, because of their economic strength have more leverage over the direction, content and amounts of news flow across countries. There is a hierarchy in the structure of global news flows. Transnational news agencies such as Reuters (Britain), the Associated Press (USA) and the Agence France Presse (AFP) still monopolise news because of their economic clout and hence advanced technological and well as human resource capacities. The national news agencies which cater to mainstream (local/domestic) newspapers inadvertently follow the news values and frameworks set by the Transnational News Media Corporations which follow a free market system. This means that the South now largely operates on the same media model as that of the West. Post-colonial societies are encountering a 're-colonisation' through the global discourse, infotainment, of the West. Previous concerns voiced at UNESCO conferences have still gone largely unaddressed, such as the clear imbalances that exist in access and control. Some national news agencies of the South have responded by forming their own co-operatives either to 'compete' with the major players, or to compensate for information that they feel is lacking, or both, but none of these have proved a successful match for their TNM counterparts. Finally, what is apparent in the investigation of news flows in the global context are competing paradigms or models or formats for how media could best operate within this global environment in the interests of the larger 'have not's'.

Endnotes

^aThis quotation adapted from T.K. Chang. 'All countries not created equal to be news: world system and international communication. *Communication Research* 25(6), pp.528-563. 1998:534, and Hamid Mowlana. *Global Information and World Communication: new frontiers in international relations*. 1997:44.

^bThe conceptions of 'centre' and 'periphery' have become problematic according to most recent writings such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) and Negri (2003). In the latter, Hardt and Negri refer to 'Empire' as a process replacing and displacing the centre-periphery relationship, where any nation can emerge to claim dominion over others, etcetera, but the essential divide between nations since the end of the Cold War has shifted from 'centre-periphery' and 'First, Second and Third Worlds', to a 'North' and 'South' context

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