**INTERNATIONAL NEWS FLOWS**

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**About this learning unit**

In this section we will focus more specifically on the international flow of news. First we deal with theories and research concerning the direction of the flow of news, as well as factors influencing the international flow of news. Then we consider the role of global news agencies, the relationship between global and national agencies and the role of regional agencies. Finally, we look at possible consequences of the international flow of news, the role of new technology such as the internet in the international flow of news and the role of language translation in constructing international news.

**Learning unit outline**

**4.1 Introduction**

**4.2 Theoretical foundations: Direction of news flow**

**4.3 Factors influencing the international flow of news**

**4.4 The role of news agencies**

**4.5 Content of international news**

**4.6 The new media and the international flow of news**

**4.7 The role of translation in international news production and flows**

**4.8 Africa and international news flows**

**4.9 South African media and international news**

**4.10 Summary**

**Crucial questions**

* Are there are patterns in the international flow of news?
* What types of news are guaranteed to have an international reach?
* Why were we so interested in news about the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in the beginning of 2011?
* What is the role of news agencies in spreading international news?
* What types of stories about and from Africa usually get international coverage?
* What influence do the internet and social media such as Facebook and Twitter have on the international dissemination of news?

**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The international flow of news is considered as one of the main forms of information exchange. According to Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998) news represents a reformulation of information as a commodity (or item of trade), which is gathered and disseminated with a view to political communication, economic activities and entertainment. This conversion process is directed by technology (e.g., telegraphy, television), faith in science (that is the value of “facts”) and the development of markets for mass media products.

Over the past few decades there has been growing interest in news flow within and across the borders of nation states (Chang 1998). The discrepancies in international news flows were one of the most important reasons for the cry for a New Information and Communication Order (NICO) (Eribo 1999 – see chapter 4). After the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, and in the former Soviet Union in 1991, the accent was not only on assumptions and challenges regarding news coverage in the era following the Cold War; academics, professional journalists and others also reflected increasingly on the implications of global news flows.

Kim and Barnett (1996) regard the international flow of news as the number of news reports and news magazines exchanged by countries in the world. According to world systems theory, the world may be viewed as a network of component units or role players which interrelate in terms of centre, periphery and semi-periphery (see chapter 4). Hence, the focus is not so much on the nature and contents of news in a particular country or region, but rather on how and why various systems interact within the international and global context (Chang 1998).

**4.2 THEORIES DESCRIBING THE INTERNATIONAL FLOW OF NEWS**

Several theories describe the flow of international news from countries to other countries. In this section, we explore these theories and also analyse their practical implications on news gathering and transmission.

**4.2.1 Directions of news flow: Theory of structural imperialism and the World Systems Theory**

***Structural inequality*** – which is a historical development brought about by, among other, constructions, colonialism and capitalism – is considered a major feature of the direction, contents and volume of the international flow of information. It is also recognised that inequalities in information flow relate closely to even greater inequalities and imbalances in the distribution of financial resources and communication technology (***digital divide***) around the world. These phenomena are often attributed to historical factors such as colonialism and prevailing economic practices, including capitalism and its manifestations such as cheap labour.

The structures and processes involved in the flow of information have interested academics and researchers since the 1950s. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers have collected substantial data attesting the inequalities in the flow of information (Bornman, Fourie, Lesame & Schoonraad 2001). This research has also resulted in the abstract conceptualisation of the structure and processes involved in information flow, as is evident in the use of terms like concentration of wealth, power and technology, the system of international relations and economic development, imperialism – media and cultural imperialism, dependency, and social construction of reality. But in order to offer explanations for international communication phenomena, these research results have to be integrated by means of appropriate theoretical models. The next few sections deal with some of the theories used to explain the direction and impact of the international flow of information, including news.

Hierarchy and structural inequality, both integral features of the world system approach, are universally recognised as major factors determining the direction, contents and volume of news flow. In keeping with the assumptions of world system theory the hierarchical positions of component units – and nation states in particular – in the global system have given rise to inequalities between developed and developing countries in both the quantity and quality of news flow and news coverage. Mowlana (1997:54–47) discusses three hypotheses in this regard that are discussed in the following sections. The term “imperialism” is commonly associated with the annexation of foreign territory and exploitation of the resources of another country or group (Frederick 1993:134–135). Imperialism has occurred throughout human history. The ancient dynasties in China and India, Athens’s domination of the Greek cities (the “states” or political entities of those days), the Roman and Turkish empires – in one way or another all of these practised imperialism (Bornman et al. 2001). In the early 16th century, developments in navigation, the concomitant expansion of world trade and the establishment of large national armies in Europe ushered in a new era of imperialism. This culminated in the colonial system of the 19th century when the European powers carved up the world into what were known as spheres of influence. These colonies, such as those in Africa and Asia, supplied the European powers with cheap labour and raw materials, which in turn gave impetus to the industrial revolution.

Since World War II, imperialism has assumed new forms. The former colonies gained their independence. It was no longer so easy for the big powers to resort to military intervention to expand their hegemony. Nowadays, nation states tend to use economic and cultural methods to extend their power and influence. Not surprisingly, Third World countries refer to current practices in the world economy as “neo-imperialism”.

As a result of these new forms of imperialism, theories of imperialism have had to be reviewed. In his structural theory of imperialism, Galtung (1971) offers an explanation for existing inequalities between countries. Like the dependency theorists, he distinguishes between centre and periphery. But his theory is not restricted to inequalities between nation states. He points out that one can also speak of a centre and a periphery within every state. Galtung (1971:81) regards the inequalities between centre and periphery as imperialism, which he defines as a relation of dominance between countries, especially between nation states. In his definition of imperialism, Stevenson (1999:94) puts the accent on the existence of an imperial centre which exercises control over another territory. Hence, the study of imperialism focusses on the practice, theory and attitudes relating to the control or dominance of the centre over the other territory. As mentioned already, forms of direct control like military conquest which characterised the colonial era have largely vanished from the modern world. Nowadays, one finds more subtle and sophisticated forms of dominance, which moreover extends far beyond the borders of individual countries. So the imperialism at issue here entails a broader structural relationship between an imperial centre and one or more nation states.

**A. Distinction between centre and periphery**

In accordance with Galtung’s (1971:89) structural theory of imperialism, it is believed that news flow in the global system is characterised by vertical flow from the centre to the periphery. If this model is expanded to allow for the world system theory’s further distinction between periphery and semi-periphery (Shannon 1996), the model has the following implications (Chang 1998; Mowlana 1997):

* The largest proportion of news items reported in the world every day derives from the centre. In other words, news from the centre dominates news coverage worldwide.
* In addition, there is a greater discrepancy in the ratio of news exchanged between centre and periphery than in the ratio of news exchanged among countries at the centre. This implies that there is a far more equal relationship in the exchange of news between countries at the centre than in the exchange between centre and periphery.
* News from the centre makes up a larger proportion of the news content of countries on the periphery than in the news coverage given to countries on the periphery in media at the centre.
* There is also little or no exchange of news between countries on the periphery.
* More news is exchanged between centre and semi-periphery than between centre and periphery. The semi-periphery thus acts as an intermediate zone between the three strata.

Empirical research reported by Mowlana (1997) generally affirms the premises of Galtung (1971). From an analysis of two African newspapers, Robert Buijtenhuis and René Baesjou (in Mowlana 1997) conclude that news in developing countries is dominated by reports provided by the large news agencies. McKenzie and Overton (in Mowlana 1997:45) found that the news flow to and from Australia still follows a colonial pattern in the sense that news from traditional sources predominates. Contrary to Galtung's assumptions, however, Buijtenhuijs and Baesjou found that there is some news flow between African countries (the periphery).

**FIGURE 4.1: Centre-periphery flow**

Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications from Mowlana (1997)

**B. Distinction between North and South**

A second view is based on the hypothesis that news flows vertically from northern to southern countries. At the same time, there is also horizontal flow between the various countries in the North and those in the South. Although some news does flow from South to North, its volume is far smaller than that of the flow from North to South. Another significant feature of news flow in the world system is known as circular flow. This comprises news events in the South which are gathered by journalists from countries in the North and dispatched to northern news agencies. These agencies process the information and then send it back to media in the South.

****This view, too, has been confirmed by research. Reyes Matta (in Mowlana 1997:45) found that international news in Latin American newspapers is dominated by news from the North. Another study found that relatively little news from Africa and South America appears in Australian newspapers. A study of news flow in nine Arab countries likewise indicates a dominant North-South flow in these countries (Rachty in Mowlana 1997:46). From a study of news in the USA, Kaplan (in Mowlana 1997:46) concluded that news coverage in the media of the US is deficient in regard to the amount, range and type of news about the developing world. The world’s large news agencies tend to concentrate on news which they believe will interest readers in developed countries. In the case of in the US, such interest relates to wealth, elitism and the political attitudes of their readers.

**FIGURE 4.2: North-South flow**

Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications from Mowlana (1997)

**C. Triangular flow between East, West and South**

A third approach is that the pattern of news flow is triangular. The North is divided into two parts, East and West, each of which is linked with the South. In a study conducted in various geographical areas, Gerbner and Marvanyi (in Mowlana 1997:46) found that countries in the East and the West cover their own areas first. This means that eastern countries give preference to news from other countries in their bloc and to East-West relations. The same applies to western countries. By contrast, the greatest proportion of international news in the

media of Third World countries (i.e., the South) comes from the North (both East and West).

**FIGURE 4.3: Triangular flow**

Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications from Mowlana (1997)

They also found that Western Europe is the area most covered in news reports worldwide,

whereas countries in the former Soviet Union are given little coverage in the western press. Thus, two thirds of the content of news in the US was about Western Europe, South Asia, the Far East, North America and the Middle East. By contrast, the press in the former Soviet Union assigned first place to news from Eastern Europe and second place to North America. Eastern Europe covered its own region and Western Europe first and devoted relatively less attention to the then Soviet Union. In contrast to the trend in the rest of the world, the Third World press devoted most attention to the Soviet Union. Stevenson and Cole (in Mowlana 1997:47) conclude that physical proximity is a major factor determining the content of international news. Another significant feature is that Western Europe and North America are the most “visible” areas in the world media, whereas Eastern Europe and developing countries receive comparatively little attention.

On the basis of the type of interaction between centre and periphery, Galtung (1971:91) distinguishes between five forms of imperialism, which are:

(1) economic imperialism;

(2) political imperialism;

(3) military imperialism;

(4) communication imperialism; and

(5) cultural imperialism.

Let us look at those types of imperialism that influence news production and influence on international audiences:

**Communication imperialism**

Communication imperialism requires in the first place that the centre should have the industrial capacity to develop and manufacture the latest information, communication and transport technology (Bornman et al 2001).

A crucial form of communication imperialism, and one that relates closely to culture, is the patterns of the flow of information. Galtung (1971:92) uses the example of the flow of news. First, the **principal news** **agencies** are all controlled by countries located at the centre. Hence, they rely on feudal communication networks dominated by the centre. In addition, news about the centre makes up a far greater proportion of news on the periphery than the other way round. Neither do the countries on the periphery write or read much about each other, especially not across the borders of power blocs. They also read more about the centre of the power bloc they belong to than about other centres. Another dimension has to do with division of labor in the field of communication. In the same way that the periphery provides raw materials which are used in manufacturing processes at the centre, it produces news events which are converted into news at the centre. This is done primarily by professional journalists who view events through the eyes of the centre. The process is then completed via communication channels in which events are filtered by a series of gatekeepers who adapt the message to fit the general pattern.

**Media and economic imperialism**

Boyd-Barrett (1977:116–135) classifies the example of the flow of news, which Galtung (1971:93) uses to illustrate imperialism in the flow of information, as media imperialism. He defines media imperialism as a process through which the ownership, structure, dissemination and/or contents of the media in any country are subjected to considerable external pressure by the media interests of another country or countries without any proportional reverse influence by the country affected by such pressure. As a result, the flow of media influence has the following characteristics:

It is mostly a one-way flow, that is vertically from the centre to the periphery – although this has changed dramatically since the advent of the **internet** and because of the use of **social media** for news production and global transmission, where anyone from anywhere can post their own news video and post it online to be viewed by anyone from anywhere else.

Although there is sometimes a flow-back from the periphery to the centre, this is often controlled by the centre as well (e.g., the centre decides what news from the periphery will be given preference) and the nature and volume of the flow-back are determined by the preferences of the population of the centre.

According to Boyd-Barrett (1977:18), the lack of a proportional flow-back of media influence from countries on the periphery indicates cultural invasion on the one hand, and an imbalance in the exchange of resources on the other. It justifies the use of the term “imperialism” in this context. The theory of media imperialism provides a framework for a systematic analysis of relations between different media systems and puts these relations in the same historical context as international political, economic and military relations.

On the basis of the degree of intentionality involved in the exchange process, Boyd-Barrett (1977:119) distinguishes between four variations of media influence:

* A country may export media influence as a deliberate commercial and/or political strategy (e.g., deliberate export of films to maximise profits).
* The influence may be disseminated unconsciously as part of a general process of political, social and commercial influencing (e.g., unwitting export of certain values depicted in media products like films).
* A country may accept media influence as part of a deliberate political strategy (e.g., a European country accepts the media products of allies in the European Union in order to demonstrate its solidarity with the EU).
* A country may absorb this influence unconsciously as a result of contact and interaction with another country (the values embodied in media products like films and television programmes are absorbed unconsciously by a country’s population).

The overall context of a power imbalance means that the country which exports media influence has far more freedom and options than the country which accepts or absorbs that influence. Despite this Boyd-Barrett (1977:119) believes that political discretion still plays a major role in the acceptance and absorption of media influence. In many instances even poor countries can take measures to reduce the impact of foreign media influence.

Another important discourse concerns the possible role of the export of media influence on economic development and modernisation in developing countries. Boyd-Barrett (1977:133) points out, however, that although the establishment of new media like the internet creates a potential for development, development is counteracted by the overall economic relations between centre and periphery. Besides, Western media products emphasise consumer values (e.g., creating a need for certain consumer products), whereas production values (i.e., values accentuating greater productivity) are needed to stimulate economic development. The potentially negative consequences have caused many countries to introduce measures to counteract media imperialism. Some of the main forms of resistance are to be found in activities associated with the New World Communication and Information Order (NWCIO, of the 1960s aimed at finding out information and technology imbalances between developed and developing countries). Another important strategy is that groups of countries join forces and share resources. The question is, however, whether these measures are effective in reducing dependence on the centre on the part of countries which are still dependent on developed countries for news and information. There are many developing countries or emerging economies that produce national and regional news and sell these stories internationally. Even in Africa, there are a few such countries, including South Africa and Nigeria, which are as competitive in global news flows as some developed countries are.

**ACTIVITY 4.1**

4.1.1 Explain the technological development of film. (10 marks)

4.1.2 “ANYBODY with the guts to invest in newspapers when the world is on the brink of a digital future deserves praise for enormous courage” (Editorial, *Business Day Online*: Welcome to Sekunjalo, our new competitor <http://www.bdlive.co.za>). Sekunjalo is a media company in South Africa. (Sekunjalo has changed media ownership in South Africa. Google it and read how they did that.)

(15 marks)

Read the above statement and describe the historical development of print media in comparison to the development of digital or online newspapers today. (10 marks)

Also see case studies 4.1 and 4.2 below:

Your answer to this question should include the following:

* the evolution and development of printing surfaces – FOR EXAMPLE, you can Google and read how the Chinese printing press started; (10 marks)
* any two advantages on online newspapers (6 marks);
* any two disadvantages of online newspapers (6 marks).

**Case Study 4.1: Sekunjalo Media and espAfrika**

Source of online article: <http://www.sekunjalo.com/private-equity/esp-afrika>

Accessed on 30-09-2013

Sekunjalo Media Holdings acquired controlling stakes in espAfrika (Pty) Ltd and the South Atlantic Jazz Festival, the organisers of the prestigious Cape Town International Jazz Festival (CTIJF).

espAfrika (Pty) Ltd are the owners of the well-renowned Cape Town International Jazz Festival currently ranked fourth in the world. They are a comprehensive events management consultancy geared towards taking care of all events and production requirements. They offer a full solution for all aspects of events from research, budgets through to the realisation of a festival, road show, conferences and corporate launches.



Figure 4.4: A global music concert makig news in Sekunjalo Media

Source: <http://www.sekunjalo.com/private-equity/esp-afrika>

Accessed on 30-09-2013

espAfrika has re-positioned event organising strategies to deliver a tangible brand directly in front of events audiences. Our expertise includes supplying equipment, staging, safety and security plan, logistics, media and marketing, public relations, merchandising, ticketing and programming for small and large events.

Our extensive experience of working with both brands and brand owners has enabled us to offer innovative and cost-effective event partnership programmes that deliver outstanding results.

**Black economic empowerment (BEE):**

espAfrika (Pty) Ltd is committed to the implementation of broad-based black economic empowerment (BEE). We strive to ensure that our economic benefits and opportunities are spread equitably across South African society.

espAfrika is a wholly black-owned and managed business, with a current operational staff complement of 14 full-time members (inclusive of 2 directors).

As an industry leader, we aim to ensure that our efforts are conducted in the spirit of empowerment. It is our aim to make a real difference rather than simply reaching an acceptable BEE score.

Ethical conduct lies at the core of all our business. We do business with those we trust and receive business from those who trust us. Where possible, we practise affirmative procurement by sourcing goods and services from black-owned small and medium enterprises (including micro-enterprises), disabled-owned companies and women-owned companies.

Internally, we aim to attract, develop and retain the best expertise for our business, challenge our people, demonstrate a “can-do” attitude and foster a collaborative and mutually supportive environment.

**GLOBAL MARKETS AND INNOVATION**

In a quest to prove that Cape Town and other cities around the African continent have the capability to deliver quality events on such an enormous scale, espAfrika proudly delivered international festivals in both Maputo and Luanda and are currently looking towards Nigeria, Rwanda and Senegal in the future.

**Mozambique**
The second Mozambique International Jazz Festival was held this year in the centre of Maputo at the Parque Dos Continuadores, with more than 8 000 people attending the event. Artists included Grammy Award winners Spyro Gyra and Norman Brown. Local musicians included Stewart Sukuma, Wazimbo, Bande Nondje, vocalist Hermimio, guitar legend Jorge Domingo, Nanando and Satellite Matola Jazz.

**Luanda**
The country’s first international jazz festival took place on 31 July – 2 August at Cine Atlantico in Luanda on two stages over three days. International artists included McCoy Tyner feat Gary Bartz, Vanessa Da Mata, Freshlyground, The Yellowjackets, Lira, Marcus Wyatt and Language 12, as well as Jimmy Dludu while Angolan artist included Paulo Flores, Afrikkanitha, Sandra Corderio, Dodo Miranda and Toto.

espAfrika has been a forerunner in the implementation of technology not only in its application systems that craft the festivals, but also in the IT which forms the front-end to these festival websites. Huge strides have been taken in webcasting as well as interactivity with a large and ever-growing corporate and individual database. This trend will soon be extended to future clients on the continent.

The success of the above is borne out of the fact that all events are conceived and executed by a small core group of specialist individuals, each with their own expanded team.

**CASE STUDY 4.2:**

# Sekunjalo finalises Independent Media purchase

Source: Mail & Guardian Online and SAPA

Published online on: 21 August 2013

Accessed online from: <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-08-21-sekunjalo-finalises-inmsa-purchase>

Accessed on 30 September 2013

Sekunjalo Media Consortium is the new owner of Independent News & Media South Africa, bringing the company back into the local media fold.



**Figure 4.5: SIM chairman Igbal Surve** (picture by Lerato Maduna, Gallo (2013) in

[http://mg.co.za/article/2013-08-21-sekunjalo-finalises-inmsa-purchasehttp://mg.co.za/article/2013-08-21-sekunjalo-finalises-inmsa-purchase](http://mg.co.za/article/2013-08-21-sekunjalo-finalises-inmsa-purchase)

Prominent South African media firm Sekunjalo Independent Media Consortium (SIM) has concluded its purchase of Cape Town-based Independent News & Media SA (INMSA).

SIM says newly appointed chairman Iqbal Surve is delighted with the deal, which was concluded last week and said: “having the business back in South African hands was good for the country, with its strong stable of titles able to play an important role in positively engaging with the people of South Africa, with the aim of enhancing the country both culturally and economically.” Surve said he is looking forward to working with the staff of the company, both as employees and as future shareholders in the soon-to-be-established staff shareholder trust.

Ireland-based parent company Independent News & Media (INM) confirmed on June 17 that its shareholders had voted in favour of selling the media group to the Sekunjalo Group.

The two INMSA shareholders are SIM (75%) and the Government Employees’ Pension Fund acting through the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) with 25%.

**“Value-adding”**

Sekunjalo Investment Holdings, Cosatu investment company Kopano Ke Matlaka, SACTWU Investments Group, the Food and Allied Workers Union and employees through a special purpose vehicle will hold 63% of SIM’s shares. A number of “broad-based, value-adding partners” will hold the other 37%.

INM chief executive Vincent Crowley said on Wednesday that he was pleased the sale had been successfully completed. He is confident the South African business will prosper in Sekunjalo and Surve’s hands.

“Based on our assessment, we are confident that the investment in Independent News & Media SA will yield the required returns and contribute positively to the South African media landscape,” said PIC chief investment officer Daniel Matjila.

INMSA chief executive Tony Howard has said he is excited about the deal and looking forward to working with the new owners.

INMSA owns the Cape Times, the Cape Argus, the Weekend Argus, the Daily Voice, The Star, Pretoria News, Saturday Star, Sunday Independent, Diamond Fields Advertiser, Weekend Pretoria News, Daily News, The Mercury, Post, Independent on Saturday, the Sunday Tribune, and Zulu daily newspaper Isolezwe and its Saturday and Sunday editions.

The company owns a number of weekly community newspapers in the Western Cape and has investments in the community newspaper markets in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

INMSA owns and runs Independent Online and publishes three Conde Nast international magazine brands: House & Garden, GQ and Glamour. – **Sapa**

4.3 “It is no longer so easy for the big powers to resort to military intervention to expand their hegemony. Nowadays nation states tend to use economic and cultural methods to extend their power and influence” (Bornman et al. 2001:164).

Against the background provided in the above quotation, write an essay in which you discuss media imperialism as a new form of global imperialism (neo-imperialism). Relate your discussion to the film industry.

**Cultural imperialism**

The term “cultural imperialism” is commonly used these days to refer to the homogenising influence of the global consumer culture, that is the levelling and even extinction of local cultures as a result of the worldwide spread of a Western-American lifestyle and the concomitant values and consumer goods (Bornman et al. 2001). According to the discourse of cultural imperialism, a major implication of this levelling process is that the spaces in which local communities observe their own cultures are becoming smaller and fewer. (The ability of a local community to develop and maintain its own culture largely depends on the local cultural space over which it exercises control.) Local initiative is dampened and the manufacturing of local cultural products suffers. The local culture is, so to speak, silenced. According to this view, the process of cultural globalisation ultimately amounts to the dominance of Western modernisation and a particular national culture – the American one. A dramatic, pessimistic scenario is painted of developing countries in which the cultures of these regions are depicted as being almost entirely absorbed by a homogenised, commercialised global culture.

**Criticism of the theory of cultural imperialism**

The discourse of cultural imperialism is being criticised on various grounds. For one thing, it represents a biased, determinist approach to cultural processes, in terms of which political and economic realities totally determine local cultures from the top down. Accordingly, cultural processes are regarded as a one-way flow of power from the cultural centres of Europe and America to other parts of the world. Secondly, the elements of popular global culture are seen as a kind of narcotic which “drugs” local populations so that they become passive recipients of these “alien” cultural goods.

**Reversed cultural imperialism**

Tomlinson (1997:180) points out that there are also instances of reversed cultural imperialism these days. Therefore, it is often assumed that television programmes from the US have a virtually unassailable position in foreign markets. But this does not always apply everywhere. In certain circumstances, products from countries on the periphery offer strong competition to global products and news, for example, Bollywood (news and movies from India, that is, the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai (Bombay)) and Nollywood (Nigerian movies, which could be interpreted in an entertainment sense, as news from Nigeria). The role of the media in promoting images of simultaneity is pivotal in processes of cultural globalisation and can be traced back to the first modern newspapers of mass circulation (Bielsa 2008:348). This implies, therefore, that news plays a significant role in society, that of spreading cultures from different countries in the world, which some adopt. This creates what is known as cultural globalisation, which some view as very much similar to cultural imperialism, if those who adopt others’ foreign culture seem to forget to practise their own national culture.

**D. Conclusions**

Overall, four important conclusions can be drawn from research on the flow of news (Mowlana 1997):

* The most significant inference is that the bulk of international news flow is from the centre, which is the North or West. Thus, news flows vertically from developed to developing parts of the world.
* Proximity — whether physical, cultural, political or ideological − is a major criterion in the media’s selection of international reports for local coverage.
* A third conclusion is that Western Europe and the US receive the greatest amount of news coverage, while the erstwhile socialist countries and the developing countries are given the least coverage.
* Although horizontal news flow (i.e. between countries on the periphery and between countries at the centre) occurs in both the developed and the developing world, this represents a relatively small proportion of total news flow. The proportion of horizontal news flow is also much smaller than both vertical and circular news flow. We can add a fifth factor to those pronounced by Mowlana above;
* Finally, some strong (economically, e.g., BRICS countries) emerging economies are making their presence felt in international news flows and have increased their news flows from their countries to other countries, and this is commendable in a world of fierce competition in news production – **See latter part of the Learning Unit on BRICS.**

The other theory prominent in describing international news flows is the modernisation theory and related theories.

**ACTIVITY 4.4**

1. **Global news flows:**
* Identify and discuss at least five extra media factors (context) that influence the coverage of international news in a story of your choice in the South African media. Select the story in online or offline media. (10 marks)
* Identify and discuss at least five news-related factors (content) that may have influenced the coverage of this international story in the South African press or media. (5 marks)

1. **Global news agencies**

*“It is apparent that three global news agencies (AFP, AP and Reuters) dominate and control the flow of international news and none of the other role players offer a real alternative to the influence of the three major global news agencies.”*

With reference to the above quotation, answer the following questions and provide examples where relevant:

* Discuss the current direction of news flow. (3)
* Discuss the consequences of the current pattern of news flow on an emerging economy (3)

Explain the Eurovision model for the exchange of news. (10 marks)

* In your opinion, can such a model be adapted in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to counterweight the dominance of global news agencies in the supply and coverage of international news about the region? Motivate your answer. (4 marks)

**4.2.2 Modernisation theory and diffusion of innovations theory**

The flow of international news from some countries can be viewed or interpreted as some form of flow of modern ideas or innovations from countries where these modern ideas emanate to other countries, which did not have the innovations but are importing these modern ideas or innovations from advanced countries. In this view, news then can be modern ideas which could bring development ideas to those countries that receive this news and find it beneficial to their countries in some way. For example, development news usually brings new ideas to readers and communities, which improve the lives of those who read them and their communities, if these individuals make use of such development news in constructive ways. Rogers’ (1962) ***theory of*** diffusion of innovations became a much used by development scholars in less developed countries for promoting development projects. Some critics, however, were quick to point out that ***diffusion of innovations*** could also be translated as the spreading of transnational corporate interests whose interests are those of profit-generating and profit-seeking advanced countries.

 The ***modernisation theory*** is the dominant paradigm of the 1940s and 1960s, which argues for the transfer of knowledge and technology from advanced economies to emerging economies. The view of Nulens and Van Audenhove (1998) about the modernisation theory is that it takes the *“*idealistic and technophilic stance towards the relationship between society and technology; the technophilic view which regards technology as having positive effects on society including an increase in jobs, an expansion of diversity and pluralism, a harmonisation of society, an increase in efficiency in private and public sectors”.

 The modernisation theory is also called the ***dominant paradigm***. The dominant paradigm also supports a dependence on technology for the purpose of development. Some developing countries cannot afford advanced technology to collect and produce international news, let alone distribute any, and still make use affordable media like radio and national television within their own borders, and oral media like theatre, to spread news and advance development projects. Dependence on developed countries is also encouraged by the dominant paradigm, since lower income countries have to be aware of new technological developments to pursue their goals. New technology is not always affordable to poor nations so some do not produce or distribute any news to other countries. Most of the time, these countries are still battling to find national solutions for internal crises such as poverty alleviation, and solving health, basic and adult education challenges.

 Critics have lambasted the modernisation theory as not really bringing much news that advances developing countries. Barnett, Jacobson, Young and Sun-Miller (1996:21) point out that inadequacies in the modernisation theory lead to an alternative elaborated by scholars primarily from Latin America, working for the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), who reached the conclusion that “the global economy cannot be conceived as a system of equal trading partners because the superior military, economic, and political power of the centre (MDCs) imposes conditions of unequal exchange on the periphery (LDCs)”(Barnett et al. 1996:21).

 They further state that the core-periphery division of labour in the capitalist world-economy leads to unequal exchange relations in favour of the core. This critique supports the view which argues that the dominant paradigm promotes technology-driven development news that favours rich nations and that poor nations have no such technology to produce or even receive such international news.

Although the modernisation theory has had critics, the theory is said to have “passed” as a dominant paradigm in studies of development communication (Jacobson 1993:214). Another critique of the modernisation theory, although this theory has guided intellectual thinking and scholarly research in the field of socio-economic development for decades, is the assumption that “modernisation of developingcountries was dependent on changing the character of inhabitants to resemble more closely the attitudinal and value characteristics in Western Europe and North America” (Melkote 2006:113). It is further not possible at present in developing countries for many rural and uneducatedpeople to radically transform their traditional life, because most rural people do not understand the aspects of modern life (because many of them have little or no education, are poor and cannot afford modernity and aspects thereof). Hence, most of these rural people prefer to engage in rural development projects such as those involving farming and agriculture. Other rural people prefer country life rather than the hustle and bustle of the city and the intrusiveness of information technology which invades ***personal privacy***, compromises ***intellectual property rights*** (IPR), disturbs ***copyright*** and individual autonomy especially in computer networks that produce and distribute international news. ***Piracy*** – whether in music or movies – is another ethical challenge that has been brought about by international news broadcasts and downloads, as individuals copy intellectual property they saw or read about in international news media. These information society challenges are issues news and entertainment media and personnel grapple to solve on a daily basis as some millions of dollars and/or rand (South African currency) are lost to some (information producers and owners, e.g., music piracy), as a result of these unethical behaviours.

The modernisation theory was challenged by the ***dependency paradigm***, which found its expression in ***media imperialism*** (e.g., Mattelart 1977; Schiller 1992) and whose basic argument locates itself in the political economy tradition by believing that the local is dominated by and dependent on global power structures.

**ACTIVITY 4.3**

**Answer these questions as a way of revising parts of this learning unit:**

* According to the theory of media imperialism, media influence flows from one country to other countries. Identify any two characteristics of this flow of media influence. **(5 x 2 marks – 10 marks)**
* Provide a discussion of two consequences of the current patterns in the international flow of news. **(3 x 4 marks = 12 marks)**
* Explain the meaning of the concept of open diplomacy as applicable to international communication interactions. You can read more about this concept in learning unit 7. However, that unit is related to this one in terms of how nations (and the media thereof) relate to and report about other nations. **(5 marks)**

**4.2.3 The Dependency Theory**

The dependency theory was worked out in an attempt to account for the limited progress of some countries and parts of the world in the sphere of economic development and modernisation generally (Chang 1998:530). Dependency theorists divide the global system into two concentric circles. Western-developed countries are at the centre, while the rest of the world is on the periphery – see **figures 4.1 and 4.2.** Poverty and a lack of economic progress and development on the periphery are attributed to historical forms of dependency like colonisation and exploitation by the institutions and corporations of developed capitalist countries.

The dependency theory is also widely criticised. It has been pointed out, for instance, that not all countries on the periphery have remained poor and dependent. Countries like Japan and Taiwan have, for example, developed into advanced modern economies in the period following World War II. It has also been questioned whether withdrawal from political and economic relations with countries at the centre – as African countries did in their relations with the former colonial powers – in fact speeds up economic growth. Other critics point out that dependency theorists ascribe the problems of countries on the periphery exclusively to external causes, whereas internal reasons, such as exploitation by local elites, contribute substantially to these countries’ hardships.

**4.2.4 The Media Framing Theory**

The idea of framing, according to Zhou (2008:118), first appeared in Goffman’s (1974) work, which defines frames as embodiments of the “principles of organization which govern social events”. In this theory, framing is a concept used as a tool to understand “news as a social construction and a social resource”. The core idea of framing as a concept is related to the fundamental process of meaning construction in which certain aspects or attributes of an issue (or news in this instance), or event, or ideas, themes and experiences are highlighted or drawn attention to, and others are left out. Frames, therefore, organise the social world and framing is concerned with the way stories are reported and certain details of those stories reported while other details of the same story are left out of being reported, based on what the reporters of that story view the story – taking into consideration their meaning, interests, culture and other factors from which they attach meaning to a news story. Therefore, according to this theory, media can provide “frames” or news angles through which readers and TV viewers can view the world or attach meaning to world events.

You may find other theories that describe the international flow of news online. Having introduced you to the few theories in the above section, we will leave discussion of those for another day. It is crucial that you critically apply these theories in real life to international news **broadcasts** that you may be watching on **TV**, to **print news** in international newspapers (**online and offline**), and also in **online** **videos and blogs**.

While it is equally important to understand theory that shapes news production, it is also equally crucial to understand other economic and social factors that shape international news production and distribution. We explore these factors in the next section.

**4.3 Factors influencing the international flow of news**

Chang (1998) concludes that the hierarchic and structural position of a country in the world system is a key determinant of the direction of news flow. But, the world system theory does not explain the fact that countries on the periphery occasionally occupy a prominent place in media at the centre. Hence, there are other factors − Chang calls them filters − affecting international news coverage.

Most authors distinguish between two groups of variables in international news coverage. The first group, namely extra-media or context-related factors, have to do with the origin of international news items and relations between certain contextual factors that have no direct bearing on the nature or news worthiness of a given item. The assumption is that international news coverage is determined partly by the context − both national and international − in which an event occurs. At the same time, it is assumed that, notwithstanding contextual factors, certain attributes of the event itself determine whether or not it is covered in international news (Chang 1998; Chang, Shoemaker & Brendlinger 1987; Kim & Barnett 1996; Mowlana 1997; Rosengren 1974). Let us consider each of the two groups of factors in turn:

**4.3.1 Context-related or extra-media factors**

Research has shown that the following factors which have little bearing to the news event itself play a role.

***Structural and hierarchic status of a country in the world system***

According to Chang (1998), what is said or done on the periphery or semi-periphery usually carries little weight in international news media. An additional factor or factors − like one or more event-related factors − are usually required for events in these countries to make the front pages of international media. Their best chance of attracting the world’s attention to what they say or do is when one or more countries at the centre notice them and, so to speak, see to it that world media focus on them. Conflict with countries at the centre, however, can make the world media focus on the periphery or semi-periphery. This is not because the periphery or semi-periphery is considered important in its own right, but because of the news value of conflict between prevailing and emerging forces in the world system. Hence, for countries on the periphery and semi-periphery the way to the world media runs via the countries at the centre. The prevalence of countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran in international news is because of the involvement of a centre country – the US – in the conflict.

***Economic variables***

A study by Rosengren (1974) showed that economic variables have a greater influence on international news coverage than most of the factors that have a direct bearing on the event. Economic variables influence the quality, quantity, availability and dissemination of news in various ways. For one thing, the media in a given country tend to give preference to news about that country’s trade partners. If a country has a high oil production or high gross domestic products, the chances of these countries being covered in the news (in countries at the centre) are increased (Wanta & Golan 2010). So does the probability if there is a fair amount of trade with the country (Wu 2007).

Furthermore, economic factors determine the availability of technological and other infrastructure for news gathering and dissemination in a particular country. In developing countries with limited technological infrastructure, it is difficult to gather news and get it to the international networks in time. Availability of infrastructure also affects the presence of foreign news correspondents – it stands to reason, for instance, that these people will not stay long in a country with limited and primitive infrastructure. A country’s economy, moreover, determines whether it has the capacity to maintain news media which can compete with the rest of the world in regard to quality, advertising and remuneration of journalists. Maintaining news media that can compete with the rest of the world is furthermore dependent on telecommunications infrastructure and tariffs and the population’s ability to pay for news products. The influence of economic factors is also evident in the fact that countries at the centre of news flow are rich ones with a large gross domestic product and fairly large populations.

***Political and ideological factors***

Political and ideological factors influence both the contents and flow of news. The degree of media freedom in a country also has a direct impact on censorship; control over foreign correspondents’ entering and leaving the country; and control over the import and marketing of news products. In addition, official and unofficial perceptions of the value of certain news items and the function and role of news in a given political system directly affect the flow of news into that system. A higher value is ascribed to news originating from countries that enjoy media freedom. Thus, the people or parties in control of a country’s political and economic life have a major impact on the flow of news. With the growth of the internet, many forecasted that the time of strict censorship is over. Unfortunately, countries like the People’s Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have developed measures to severely restrict the international flow of news. China has developed what has become known as the “Great Firewall of China” that filters content and makes it very difficult for its citizens to access news from outside its borders (Ramsy 2010). In early 2011, the citizens of Egypt started calling for the resignation of their president Hosni Mubarak. In a move to apparently minimise the chances for similar calls for reform in their country, the government of China blocked access to information on the uprising in Egypt, trying to stem the flow of international news to China and its citizens (China blocks unrest…2011). In Saudi Arabia, access to the internet is also restricted by the government that filters out any “dangerous” content (Abdallah ibn Al-Saud 2010).

***Social and cultural proximity***

We may assume that cultural, religious and other differences seriously impede the flow of news. Language, problems of translation and ethnic attitudes and prejudices are the main complicating factors. Countries speaking the same language, for instance, are more inclined to exchange news and news products than countries speaking different languages. Thus, countries in Africa where English is the lingua franca are more likely to exchange news, while there is less news exchange with Francophone African countries. Other important social and cultural factors are the extent of migration between two countries, the amount of travel between two countries and historical relations between countries (Wanta & Golan 2010). Another factor could be religious diversity. According to Golan (2010) countries with a lower religious diversity than the home nation would receive more coverage.

**ACTIVITY 4.6**

The international flow of news is characterised by hierarchy, dependency and imperialism. Provide a critical discussion of this statement in which you refer to dominant tendencies in the international news flows, major role players as well as potential forms of counter flow. **(10 marks)**

***Geographic proximity***

Like sociocultural similarity or closeness, geographical proximity also favours the exchange of news between countries. When distances are fairly small, people often regard news from nearby countries as local news and accord it greater prominence in their reporting. Therefore, people on the American continent prefer reading news about other countries on their continent rather than news from further afield. South Africans regard news from Namibia or Zimbabwe as local news. Eribo (1999) found that the largest percentage of international news in Nigerian media came from other African countries. According to Kim and Barnett (1996:330) and Wu (2007:543), geographical distance plays a lesser role in news flow within the overall world system. This implies that distance is no longer such an important factor when it comes to really great distances.

***Attributes of the population***

It is assumed that the larger a country’s population, the more communication it will have with other nation states, the more news will be produced and disseminated and the more news will be imported. In their study of global news flow, Kim and Barnett (1996:347) and Wanta and Golan (2010:122) found that most countries with large populations occupy a key position in the international flow of news. Another attribute that could affect news flow is the literacy of a country’s population. It not only affects people’s awareness and perception of the outside world, but also determines the amount of news that they produce and import.

**Case study 4.3: Some countries are more equal than others when it comes to international news**

Chang (1998) chose the first congress of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) held in Singapore in 1996 as an occasion to study the flow of news in the world system. This congress was attended by 128 member countries of the WTO, 34 countries with observer status, 49 international organisations and more than 1 000 journalists from virtually all corners of the earth.

It would seem that the organisers of the congress did all they could to create a level playing field for all participants and to ensure that the congress was not dominated by centre countries (Chang 1998). In the course of the congress, for example, every country was given equal time − five minutes − to state its official position. There were also several media information sessions, news conferences, group meetings and bilateral talks to which the media had free access.

Chang (1998) investigated news coverage of the congress by the global news agency Reuters (see section 4.5). Various information sources were analysed:

* the official position of every country as presented on that country’s website on the internet, which was created specifically for the congress
* Reuters’s daily press releases, which were on a special website
* additional information on congress proceedings was obtained from the WTO’s Geneva-based website

In his analysis of the findings, Chang (1998) used Shannon’s (1996) division of the world system into three strata – the centre, semi-periphery and periphery. Every time a country’s name featured in a Reuters news story, it was awarded one mark. If a particular country was mentioned more than once in the same story, it still received only one mark. While identical stories were analysed only once, additional updated stories were treated as separate news items. Since no addresses by individual countries were heard on the fifth day of the congress (it was set aside for summaries and a joint declaration), Reuters’s stories for that day were not included in the analyses.

The results showed that a total of 108 WTO member countries and 16 countries with observer status stated their positions in the course of the congress. Reuters released 116 news stories about the congress at an average of 29 per day. Of the WTO member countries, 40,7% were given coverage; more than half were never mentioned in Reuters’s news releases. Among the countries with observer status, only China, Russia and Taiwan were given coverage. Apart from Saudi Arabia and Vietnam, none of the countries which attended the congress as non-members were mentioned in the news releases.

Consequently, although in the congress proceedings every country enjoyed equal status to put its case, Reuters viewed the proceedings with different eyes. Their news releases gave countries unequal coverage. Thus, on the first day of the congress 50% of the countries − most of them from the centre and semi-periphery − presented their cases. In the news coverage of that day the **USA** was mentioned in 86,7% of the stories, the European Union in 36,6%, Singapore in 36,7%, Canada in 36,6%, Great Britain in 26,7%, Australia in 23,3% and Germany in 16,7%. Although Japan’s representatives never spoke at all on the first day, that country was mentioned in 43,3% of the reports. China, too, was mentioned in 16,7% of the stories. But, most of the countries from the periphery who stated their positions were ignored by Reuters. In their eyes, the USA, the EU, Japan, Singapore and Canada were the newsmakers of the day.

The 26 countries − including Russia − who put their cases on the second day were mostly located on the periphery. Only five of them were covered in news reports. Japan was given most prominence, being covered in 64,5% of the stories. Despite the fact that they had no official opportunity to speak on the second day, the USA and the EU continued to dominate the reports, being mentioned in respectively 87,1% and 77,4% of the stories. Other countries mentioned in reports of the proceedings of the second day were Canada (58,1%), Malaysia (41,9%), China (29%) and Indonesia (22,6%).

On the third day of the official proceedings, once all the key players had stated their cases, the focus shifted to press conferences and other peripheral activities. Of the 21 news stories released by Reuters on that day, the USA was mentioned in 85,7%, the EU in 66,7%, Canada in 57,1% and Japan in 57,1%. The only other country to receive significant coverage on that day was Malaysia (28,6%). Thus, most countries — especially those on the periphery and semi-periphery — had no news value in Reuters’s eyes.

Chang (1998) concludes that states are not equal when it comes to newsworthiness. Inequalities in news coverage were particularly striking in the treatment of Africa. Nearly a quarter of the speakers at the congress (23,1%) were from Africa and almost a third of the member countries of the WTO are African. Despite this, African countries were mentioned in only 9,1% of the news reports. As a newsmaker in international communication, a country like Australia carries more weight than all the African countries put together. Only one out of every ten African countries was given a chance to feature in news reports, as opposed to four out of every ten countries in every other part of the world system. By contrast, the North American countries (the USA and Canada) hardly ever left the spotlight of the news media. Thus, a country’s chances of being covered in the international news media depend largely on its position in the world system.

**ACTIVITY 4.6**

To learn more about the Framing theory, you can read about it online. For example, you can read Zhou’s (2008) article, which can be accessed at:

Zhou, X. 2008. Cultural dimensions and framing the internet in China: a cross-cultural study of newspapers’ coverage in Hong Kong, Singapore, the US and the UK. *The International Communication Gazette* 70(2):117-136. Available online at: <http://gaz.sagepub.com>

Article: 10.1177/1748048507086908

**4.3.2 Event or news related factors**

As mentioned in the introduction, it is assumed that factors relating directly to an event or news item play a major role in its global dissemination. These include the following factors:

***Social deviancy***

Chang et al (1987) consider the degree to which an event is regarded as socially deviant to be a cardinal factor, determining whether or not it will be covered in the international media. They define “social deviancy” as the extent to which an event jeopardises the status quo in a country. This means that international news will tend to be crisis-oriented and that news about rebellions, wars and coups will be given preference. An event such as the uprisings in Egypt and Libya in the beginning of 2011 that called for social reform and regime change have a better chance of receiving international coverage.

Lee (2005 in Chang, Salmon, Lee, Choi & Zeldes 2010) adds public health crises to the list, as the “expanding global village” has led to people coming into contact with one another on a more regular basis and, therefore, being aware of diseases. The spread of the swine flu virus H1N1 in 2009 and bird flu in 2006–2010 are examples that caused a stir in international news.

***Statistical deviancy***

Related to epidemics are the sheer size and scope of an event – the immense loss of life will cause the event to be covered by the global media (Chang et al. 2010). An example of such an instance was the earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010. An estimated 300 000 people were killed and a million people made homeless. The event was covered by the media across the world.

***Normative deviancy***

An event may also be considered deviant if it conflicts with a society’s norms, implies a threat or alternative to certain social norms, or has the potential to effect large-scale social change. The persecution of gays in Uganda is an example, where a newspaper (*Rolling Stone* – not in any way connected to the American music magazine of the same name) called for the killing of homosexuals and some of these killings were actually carried out (Bornman 2001).

***Relevance to elite nations, countries and people***

In international news, preference is given to news that relates directly to elite nations, countries or people or that has direct implications for them. An event about the British royal family (like Prince William’s wedding), a famous Hollywood star or the American presidential election stands a better chance of getting worldwide coverage. On the other hand, there is also a factor known as ethnocentrism or functional distance. Thus, a country’s media will give preference to events which either involve that country or have direct implications for it. Chang et al (1987) and Wanta and Golan (2010) found that American news media give preference to events in which the USA is directly involved.

***Perceptions of journalists and editors***

The perceptions of editors and journalists – especially foreign correspondents – of the social value and newsworthiness of items largely determine which events will be covered and which will be ignored (Rampal 2007).

***Timeliness***

Old news ceases to be news (Bornman et al 2001). International news thrives on recent events. There is little likelihood that international media will cover an event if it comes to the notice of foreign correspondents at some time after its occurrence. Hence, news from the periphery which, for various reasons (e.g. lack of infrastructure, absence of foreign correspondents in these areas), take some time to reach the headquarters of global news agencies stands a fair chance of being ignored.

***Number of foreign correspondents and news agencies operating in a country***

The amount of coverage given to a country also depends greatly on the number of foreign correspondents and news agencies operating there. Mowlana (1997) regards the imbalance in the distribution of foreign correspondents as a key factor underlying the uneven dissemination of news. On the other hand, the number of news correspondents in a country is probably largely determined by its position and status in the world system. The recent economic recession also had a role to play, as it became increasingly expensive to budget for a foreign correspondent during a time when the revenue of most publications went down. The developments in technology, however, are changing the concept of “needing” a foreign correspondent in a country to ensure quality foreign news (Hamilton & Jenner 2004).

Another development is the use of a so-called *foreign correspondent*. This is a local citizen from the country that reports. This individual will be less expensive to employ than sending a correspondent to the country (Hamilton & Jenner 2004).

**ACTITIY 4.7**

Write a short essay explaining the role of foreign correspondents in national news broadcasting.

In your short essay, state whether these correspondents add value to news broadcasting or not, and if yes, explain how.

***The human factor***

Taylor (1999) mentions that foreign correspondents’ attention is often captured by human interest stories. In October 2010, a group of Chilean miners were saved after being trapped underground for more than two months. The herculean effort it took to bring the miners safely back to the surface caught the attention of the world and was covered by every news medium on earth. The event gripped the imagination of people across the world as people identified with the miners’ families in their anticipation of the rescue and the possibility of being reunited with their loved ones.

***Role of news agencies***

The role of news agencies remains a cardinal factor in the nature and flow of news. Wu (2007), states that online and print news relies heavily on news agencies for international news. Publications will close their overseas offices and rely more on news agencies for their international news. The next section deals with their role in greater depth. There remain only a few truly international news agencies and these are still owned by US and British interests. The coverage of news events will thus in turn be greatly influenced by the factors mentioned above (Thussu 2006).

**4.4 The role of news agencies**

News agencies have not only become major role players in globalisation at the economic, social, cultural and political levels, but they also strongly influence the interaction between the global and local scenarios. To understand the influence of news agencies on the international flow of news, one has to study their activities at the global, national and regional levels, as well as the interaction between these levels (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen 1998:1–6; Mowlana 1997:47–55). Because of the growing importance of television news, we deal separately with companies involved in the worldwide dissemination of television news. The gathering and dissemination of news as a commodity at a global, national and regional level are directed and controlled by news agencies. Biesla (2008), states that from the middle of the 19th century, telegraph communications radically altered the way in which news was produced, when the individual items of modern newspapers were no longer selected on the basis of spatial proximity but following newly emerging journalistic criteria of news relevance. This meant that only the most recent news was newsworthy and that increasing competition to break news started to take place.

The time-factor, in international news, is all important. Historically, the infrastructure for the production of global news was established during the second half of the 1800s. From the 1840s, the first telegraphic lines were set up, to 1858 when the first cable was laid across the Atlantic, and the following ten years. Many other media are much recorded after those years. In the 1990s, Manuel Castells (see learning units 1 and 2) wrote about new media and communication networks such as the internet, which also changed how international news is produced and distributed. “The field of global news is characterised today by market dominance of fewer organizations that have become stronger after processes of ***concentration***, ***deregulation***, ***privatization*** and ***commercialization*** of media industries to an unprecedented degree” (Biesla 2008:349). Concentration means that media are owned by a few rich individuals or companies. Deregulation is a government-imposed policy which allows competition to occur in the communications industry by ensuring that more companies are allowed to operate and sell services in the market. Deregulation is sometimes called ***liberalisation***. Privatisation is a policy aimed at selling some stake in government-owned enterprises to the private sector, with the aim of improving the performance of those state entities and generating income for the state-owned enterprise (SOE). Commercialisation implies selling of ICT services and it promotes business and also favours those who have economic means of entering business partnerships. News is also a commercial entity. News corporations produce news to sell it all over the world so these corporations compete in the news production business. **Bloomberg** is well known for being one of the major competitors in financial news production and distribution.

If you would to learn more about the historical development of news-producing technologies and the history of global news agencies, you may further read the following article which you can Google online:

Biesla, E. 2008. The pivotal role of news agencies in the context of globalization: a historical approach. *Global networks* 8(3):347–366.

**4.4.1 Global news agencies**

The above section has briefly described how and when global news agencies developed. Boyd-Barrett (1998:19) calls global news agencies “wholesalers” who collect news worldwide and sell it to “retailers” like national and other local news agencies, suppliers of news to the internet, and other “consumers” like businesses, financial institutions, governments and private individuals.

***Main role players on the global news scene***

It is commonly accepted that since the 1990s there have been three major global news agencies: Agence France Presse (AFP), Associated Press (AP) and Reuters (Boyd-Barrett 1998). Lately, a fourth agency, United Press International (UPI) in the USA, has also waned over the past decade (Rampal 2007; Thussu 2006). Despite the fact that these companies, because of the scope of their activities, may rightly be considered global corporations, they have all retained their links with a particular nation state. Thus, AFP is associated with France, AP with the USA and Reuters with Great Britain.

**Case study 4.2 Global news agencies – the big players**

**Agence France Presse (AFP)**

The AFP website [sa] provides the following information:

AFP can trace its history back to 1835 with the creation of the world’s first international news agency, Agence Havas. After the liberation of France from Nazi occupation during the Second World War, it was renamed Agence France Presse.

Each region of the world has its own teams of editors bringing their regional experience to the story. The service is closely coordinated by the chief editor in Paris to give AFP deep local knowledge and a global reach.

* North America : Washington
* Latin America : Montevideo
* Europe Africa : Paris
* Middle East : Nicosia
* Asia-Pacific : Hong Kong

AFP delivers news from every corner of the world, 24 hours a day in video, text, photographs, graphics and a pre-packaged multimedia format to a broad range of clients: newspapers, national news wires, television and radio stations. Every day AFP files: 5,000 text stories in six languages (English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Arabic), 20 television news reports, up to 3,000 photographs, 80 still and interactive graphics. Other languages are offered through partner agencies including Chinese and Japanese.

Source: AFP ... [sa].

***Associated Press (AP)***

The AP website [sa] provides the following information:

Founded in 1846, the AP today is one of the largest sources of independent newsgathering. The AP considers itself to be the backbone of the world’s information system, serving thousands of daily newspaper, radio, television, and online customers with coverage in text, photos, graphics, audio and video.

Headquartered in New York, the AP’s mission is to be the essential global news network, providing distinctive news services of the highest quality, reliability, and objectivity with reports that are accurate balanced and informed. About 3,700 employees – two-thirds of them newsgatherers – work in more than 300 locations worldwide. The AP supplies a steady stream of news around the clock to its domestic members, international subscribers, and commercial customers. It has the industry’s most sophisticated digital photo network, a 24-hour continuously updated online news service, a state-of-the-art television news service and one of the largest radio networks in the United States. It also has a commercial digital photo archive that is one of the world’s largest collections of historical and contemporary imagery.

The AP has received 49 Pulitzer Prizes, more than any other news organization in the categories for which it can compete. It also has 30 photo Pulitzers, the most of any news organization. Neither privately owned nor government-funded, the AP is anot-for-profit news cooperative, owned by its American newspaper and broadcast members. They elect a board of directors that directs the cooperative.

Source: Asssociated Press [sa]

**Reuters**

Reuters opened its first office in 1851 in London, its role being the sending of stock market quotations between London and Paris. Reuters had a reporter stationed in South Africa by 1861, as well as other countries such as Australia and in Asia. It became a private company in 1915 and went public in 1984, with most of its shareholders in the United States and Britain (Rampal 2007:108–109). Reuters’ main function is to supply financial news to markets and news organisation in 157 countries subscribe to its service. The company uses an extensive private satellite network, as well as the internet and states that it reaches 50 million users a month (Rampal 2007:114–115).

Although the activities of other role players like Germany’s Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA) and Spain’s EFE (full name unknown) have grown in importance and scope, they are not yet counted among the greats. Boyd-Barrett (1998) does not rate the agencies of the former Soviet Union, ITAR-TASS and China’s Xinhua among the major global role players, because there is no clear dividing line between their activities as news agencies and as government departments. They do not function as commercial companies and in normal circumstances are not paid to supply news to their respective governments. The influence of ITAR-TASS (still a government controlled agency) has declined sharply following the emergence of alternative Russian news sources like the private company Interfax and regional companies in the states of the Russian federation (Rampal 2007). ITAR-TASS and Xinhua continue to play a major role as news sources in Russia and China but not in the news supply of other countries. Another Asian agency is the Japanese Kyodo which has an English-language service and a decent international presence, based on 50 locations overseas (Thussu 2006).

***Role players in the field of financial news***

The large news agencies also greatly influence the activities of other global role players. Financial news and information, for instance, have become vital for the functioning of the global economy. In this area, too, Reuters has been a leading global agency for almost 150 years. In the 1980s, Reuters managed to supersede other significant role players like Associated Press (AP), Dow Jones, Telerate and Commodity News Service (CNS) and by 1996 it was definitely the chief global provider of financial data and news.

In the field of financial news, however, Reuters faces fierce competition from established companies like AP-DJ (after AP and Dow Jones joined forces) and AFX News. This agency provides financial news compiled by **AFP** and the **Financial Times**. **Bloomberg** delivers 24-hour real-time financial news across the globe. Its news service, Bloomberg News is also providing news in five languages to 250 newspapers internationally (Thussu 2006).

**CASE STUDY 4.4 AND ACTIVITY 4.7: SOME NEWS AGENCIES**

**Google**, find (“visit"” and read the following web pages (that follow after the bullet points) about these news agencies and learn, and explain or briefly describe (or identify) in a short essay, about:

* the history of the news agencies;
* how they produce and distribute international news;
* the political and ideological identity of the news agencies, and if there are any influences on how they produce and distribute news; where they are located and in which other countries do they have offices or reporters capturing news;
* languages do they produce and broadcast (or print) news;
* relationship of the agency with the state (consider issues such as censorship, regulation, and so on);
* the visibility and credibility of the news agencies in the world; and
* business partners with which these agencies produce and distribute the news.

(A) Xinhua News Agency (Beijing, China); <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinhua_News_Agency>

(B) AFP around the world (France, United States of America, Hong Kong, Uruguay, etc.); <http://www.afp.com/en/agency/afp-in-world>

***Hierarchy, dependency and imperialism in the international flow of news***

None of the other role players offer a real alternative to the influence of the three major global news agencies. Hence, one may conclude that the number of “voices” on the global news scene is relatively small. In addition, the large global news companies are all concentrated in North America and Europe and are located in the richest countries of the world: Great Britain, France, the USA and Germany. Thus, hierarchy, dependency and imperialism all feature when it comes to the role of the large news agencies in the flow of news.

Hierarchy is apparent in the fact that a handful of global agencies supply news to clients − including national news agencies (see next section) − around the world (Boyd-Barrett 1998:27). This hierarchy in its turn leads to dependency. According to Mowlana (1997:48), the most visible form of dependency is quantitative, that is the extent to which nation states and national news agencies around the world are reliant on the large agencies. This form of dependency relates not only to news on international events but also to news about their own geopolitical region.

An analysis of three international crises in four Norwegian newspapers in the 1960s revealed that more than 87% of the news items analysed were provided by the large global news agencies (Mowlana 1997:48–49). A content analysis of the leading newspapers in India, Kenya, Lebanon, Japan and Norway from 1961 to 1968 showed that at least half the international news items came from these agencies. Almost ten years later, in 1977, an analysis of 14 Asian newspapers showed that over 75% of non-local news about Third World countries was provided by the large news agencies. A study of mutual coverage in Canada and the USA in 1978 showed that more than 70% of news about the USA in Canadian newspapers derived from the large agencies. And in Latin America, an analysis of 16 dailies in 14 countries found that 80% of international news came from the “big four”. A more recent study by Meyer (1989) showed that between 56 and 76% of international news items in the daily papers of three African countries (Zimbabwe, Kenya and Zambia) and Buenos Aires derived from the big global agencies. Meyer found, moreover, that African countries rely on the large agencies even more heavily than Latin America. Latin American countries made greater use of their own regional services and also received news from smaller agencies like the Spanish EFE and Inter Press Service, an organisation specialising in development news.

Interestingly, in a study of articles from AP, Agence France Presse, Reuters, Xinhua, ITAR-TASS and Inter Press Service on the issue of war between the USA and Iraq, Horvit (2006) stated that IPS quoted the highest percentage of non-official sources, while Xinhua was the only agency to report from Cuba.

Meyer (1989) describes the large global news agencies’ almost absolute control over the range of world news as imperialism or neo-imperialism. This form of imperialism permits the USA, Great Britain and France to exercise all but total control over news flow. There are also signs of vertical news flow from the periphery to the centre, which in its turn disseminates the news to the rest of the periphery. In some respects, the international flow of news could also be described as neo-colonial. Thus, the British Reuters largely controls the flow of international news to Britain’s erstwhile colonies in Africa, while news flow to and from South American countries is mainly via the USA.

According to Boyd-Barrett (1998), hierarchy, dependency and imperialism on the global news scene are to some extent balanced nowadays by fierce competition between different players on the scene. The advent of television news has also meant that a wider variety of role players is operating on the international market. Another positive feature of the global news scene is that all the international news agencies operate as independent companies, both financially and politically. As a result, the news they produce has considerable credibility.

**4.4.2 Global television news agencies**

Over the last few decades, television news has played an increasingly important role. The “wholesalers” of television material are, however, somewhat different from those of other news forms. There are three major groups (Guback & Varis 1982:10–11, 34; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen 1998:14–18):

* In the first place, regional networks like Eurovision, Intervision and others play a major role in the dissemination of television news material in their various regions. These regional networks have also taken the first steps towards the establishment of a global exchange system. The regional networks differ from other news agencies in that television news is not exchanged on a commercial basis.
* Secondly, there are several global commercial television news agencies. Two of the big global agencies, Associated Press Television News (APTN) and Reuters, also supply audio-visual news for television.
* Thirdly, some of the “retailers” – that is international television news broadcasters like CNN, BBC World Service and Sky News – are also increasingly acting as “wholesalers” by supplying television material to other transmitters and providing printed news services on the internet. Other examples are Al-Jazeera, based in Qatar and aimed at the Middle East and TeleSur, based in Venezuela, was started in 2005 as an alternative to the USA and European news dominance (Straubhaar 2007:189).

**CASE STUDY 4.5 Retailers, wholesalers ... who are they?**

***CNN***

CNN (Central News Network) was founded in 1980 in Atlanta, Georgia, where its head office remains to this day. From its small beginnings, it has become one of the world biggest players in the international news market. It has been at the breaking point of all the major news events for the past few years, with the coverage of the Gulf War in the early 1990’s being a highlight. The founder, Ted Turner, boasted at one time that people like Fidel Castro and Margaret Thatcher were faithful viewers (Central News…2011). CNN is no longer just an international television news station, but also a supplier of news material.

 CNN’s website describes the activities of the news channels as follows ([sa]):

*The international edition of CNN.com is constantly updated to bring you the top news stories from around the world. It is produced by dedicated staff in London and Hong Kong, working with colleagues at CNN's world headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and with bureaus worldwide. CNN.com relies heavily on CNN's global team of over 4,000 news professionals. CNN.com/International features the latest multimedia technologies, from live video streaming to audio packages to searchable archives of news features and background information.*

***BBC World Service***

The BBC World Service website gives the following information on the activities of this news channel:

*We are the world’s leading international broadcaster providing programmes and content for radio, television, online and mobile phones in English and 27 other languages. Hundreds of reporters and specialist correspondents bring impartial news reports, documentaries and analysis from around the globe. We also offer a rich mix of other programming from arts, business and culture to drama, science and sport. BBC World Service is one part of the collected international-facing television, radio and online services which form BBC Global News.*

***Al-Jazeera***

The Al-Jazeera website [sa] describes the activities of this channel as follows:

Al Jazeera Network has more than 65 bureaus across the globe – most of these are rooted in the global South. Al Jazeera has more than 3,000 staff members across the world, including more than 400 journalists from more than 60 countries. The Al Jazeera English global footprint continues to grow, broadcasting to more than 220 million households in more than 100 countries.

Al Jazeera English broadcasts news and current affairs 24 hours a day, seven days a week with 12 hours broadcast from Doha Headquarters, and 4 hours from our centres in Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington, DC and can be watched streaming live on line at: [www.livestation.com/aje](http://www.livestation.com/aje).

Al Jazeera is the most watched news channel on You Tube, receiving 2.5 million views per month. Launched on April 16, 2007, the Al Jazeera English YouTube site has more than 10,000 videos currently live on the English channel. In January 2007, Al Jazeera English replaced BBC World on Yes, Israeli satellite television.

Al Jazeera English has received many nominations and awards for news and programming from various organisations, including the International Emmys, The Royal Television Society, The Monte Carlo Film Festival, YouTube, The Foreign Press Association, The Association of International Broadcasters and Amnesty International.

As in the case of financial and other news, we must conclude that most of the agencies disseminating television news are located in developed Western countries in North America and Europe. On the whole, television broadcasters throughout the world are almost totally dependent on one or more of these agencies for visual material on international news events. According to Guback and Varis (1982:34–35), this dependence is particularly great among developing countries like those in Asia and Africa. In Asian countries between 80 and 100% of television material on international events derives from international news agencies. Thus, the attributes of hierarchy, dependency and imperialism discussed in the previous section largely apply to international television news as well. Although these features are also noticeable to some extent in the functioning of regional agencies, it could be that these agencies manage to affect a more balanced spread in the international flow of television news material.

**4.4.3 National news agencies**

While the large news agencies gather news globally and sell it on the world markets, national news agencies are important intermediaries in the control and dissemination of news at a national level (Mowlana 1997:50–51; Rantanen 1998:35).

***Relations between national and global news agencies and the nation state***

The emergence of national agencies relates to the development of the nation state (Boyd-Barrett 1998:5). As a result, national agencies are caught up in the dialectic between the nation state and globalism. National news agencies have always been regarded as necessary institutions to lend credibility and prestige to nation states, promote their images abroad and contribute to nation building at home.

*Influence of the 19th-century global news cartel on relations between global and national news agencies*

When researchers first started taking an interest in relations between the global and local scenes, the accent was on the dependence of national agencies on global companies (Rantanen 1998:34). This was particularly so following the publication of exact details of the global news cartel established by Reuters (Great Britain), Havas (France) and Wolff (Germany) in 1859. This agreement divided the global news market between these three companies (after 1927 the US’s **Associated Press** was included in the agreement). Until 1934, when the cartel broke up, other news agencies were prevented from gaining access to the exclusive territory of each of these global agencies. In addition, national agencies were bound by contract to the global company under whose control they fell. According to this arrangement, a national agency obtained exclusive access to news from the global agency, but was not permitted to supply news it had gathered about its own country to other news agencies. Hence, each national agency was totally dependent on the global company which controlled their areas.

Most researchers find it hard to understand why national agencies put up with this dependence in the first place. According to Rantanen (1998), their bewilderment stems from incomprehension of the relationship between global and national agencies, which in turn results from the fact that global and national companies are usually studied separately. On the whole, the role of global agencies is studied within the framework of international communication, in which the dependence of national agencies on global agencies is emphasised. Internal competition on national markets is largely ignored. In journalism, on the other hand, the focus is almost exclusively on relations within the local or national markets without taking note of international links. Hence, the global and national news markets have been studied like two independent variables.

Rantanen (1998) maintains that one cannot grasp the globalisation of news if one separates the global and local scenes. Globalisation of news started in the 19th century when electronic news was commodified (i.e., became a commercial article) and sold to newspapers and other clients on the world markets. National agencies were important to the global agencies as cheap sources of news about their national or local situations. Such local news could be bartered by national agencies as part payment for the services of the global agencies, among which access to international news was probably the main one.

When electronic news was commodified and monopolised on the global market, the same thing happened on national markets. The critical link between global and national markets lies in the transformation of news from public to exclusive property. Because news becomes common property so quickly, news agencies can only survive financially by excluding newspapers (or other media) which do not pay for news from the use of it. For this reason, both global and national agencies accepted the principle of exclusiveness and it became applicable to global and local markets alike.

The news cartel was consequently characterised by two forms of exclusiveness. Firstly, the global agency in control of a particular region had exclusive access to the news of the relevant national news agencies. Although national agencies could not operate on the public market, they applied the principle of exclusiveness to the local market. Their exclusive contract with a global news cartel prevented other local competitors from gaining access to the cartel's international news. While the global news agencies monopolised the international news market, each national news agency had a monopoly on the provision of international news to the local market. Thus, a monopoly was established on both the global and the local market. Rantanen (1998:37) refers to this phenomenon as global and national exclusiveness. Hence, the relation between global and national agencies was rather one of interdependence, marked by two different forms of exclusiveness. This explains why national agencies subscribed to the cartel system for over 60 years.

*Relations between national and global news agencies at the start of a new millennium*

Whereas global agencies operate beyond national borders, national agencies confine their operations exclusively to the domestic market. Research into the role of national agencies confirms their dependence on global agencies. In a sense, they are like Trojan horses serving globalisation by introducing international contents into the local scene through their exclusive commitment to the global companies. At the same time, national agencies play a direct, integral role in the dissemination of both local and international news in their respective countries. There has also been a marked increase in the participation of national agencies in outputs of news about the Third World (Mowlana 1997).

Research into the Canadian national agency, Canadian Press, showed that national agencies have far greater influence than global agencies on issues regarding the national discussion agenda. A national agency largely determines what world events will be discussed and debated in everyday discourse among the people of that country. Furthermore, although the global agencies dominate the world market, they have no direct control over the way national companies play their role as gatekeepers through the selection of news contents and qualitative transformation of international news in order to manipulate people's perceptions of the outside world. Hence, the process of “world image-making” appears to be firmly in the hands of national agencies rather than those of the global agencies.

Most research into national agencies focuses on ownership and organisation. Mowlana (1997) distinguishes between three forms of ownership: (1) some 43% of national agencies worldwide are owned and/or subsidised by their respective governments; (2) another 31% are owned by media organisations or there is some form of cooperative ownership; and (3) in 27% of cases, ownership is divided between government and the media. According to the available statistics, however, governments own a share in some 73% of national agencies in the world. One concludes that governments around the world play a major role on the local news scene. The dialectic between global and national agencies − hence between the global and national scenes − is probably just as relevant today as it was in the 19th century when news cartels were first formed. On the one hand, national agencies are still dependent − maybe even more so − on global news agencies for their international news. On the other hand, global news agencies are reliant on healthy local markets to ensure a clientele for their (news) products. National agencies not only play an important role in stimulating local news markets, but also serve as major sources of local news for the global agencies.

**ACTIVITY 4.8**

Explain in a brief essay, the relationship that exists between national and international news agencies.

Also explain the difference/s between news retailers and wholesalers. Provide an example of each.

***Alternative agencies***

*Inter Press Service*

Inter Press Service (IPS) was founded in 1964 by Italian-Argentinean economist Roberto Savio and Argentinean political scientist Pablo Piacentini (Our history...2010). The mission of IPS is stated as the following: “‘giving a voice to the voiceless’ – acting as a communication channel that privileges the voices and the concerns of the poorest and creates a climate of understanding, accountability and participation around development, promoting a new international information order between the South and the North.”

According to the IPS website, approximately 70% of its journalists report from the South and are, therefore, able to give an impression of the impact of globalisation on the South, from the perspective of the South. Reports by IPS reach nearly 570 print publications across the globe, indicating a readership of an estimated 200 million. Furthermore, online and print media in 97 countries utilise IPS, with more than 3 500 radio stations and networks making use of IPS radio news, possibly reaching close to 150 million listeners (Our audiences… 2010).

In conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme, IPS launched the South-South Executive Brief in 2008. This monthly publication focuses on the relations between developing nations and is published from IPS’s United Nations bureau in New York (Globalisation 2010).

*New American Media*

New America Media (NAM) was founded by Pacific News Service in 1996. Its headquarters are in California, with offices in New York and Washington, DC. According to its website, NAM “is dedicated to bringing the voices of the marginalised – ethnic minorities, immigrants, young people, elderly – into the national discourse” (About New...2010).

**4.5 Content of international news**

Despite the fact that globalisation has led to a compression of temporal and spatial differences, most people are not able to travel to every corner of the world to obtain first-hand information about “reality”, that is objective facts about world events. Hence, our perceptions of the world are largely shaped by the mass media. Paterson (1998) regards the role players involved in international news – and global news agencies in particular – as a major force in shaping global perceptions of world events. His main reasons for this view are the following:

* Global news agencies determine the agenda for international news in the sense that they decide where to deploy resources (e.g., where to station foreign correspondents and television news teams and where to send them).
* These agencies decide what stories to cover in international bulletins and disseminate to their clients.
* They decide on the nature and amount of visual and/or audio-visual material to supply, as well as the nature and content of the accompanying textual information.
* The influence of global agencies on decision making in this regard is even greater in the case of countries on the periphery and semi-periphery. Research has shown, moreover, that an ideological component – that is a particular perception of the world – is integral to all the processes involved in the production of international news. Altheide (in Paterson 1998:82) puts it thus: “The organizational, practical, and other mundane features of news work promote a way of looking at events which fundamentally distorts them.”

Mowlana (1997) and Van Ginneken (1998) list the following potential consequences of current patterns of news flow in the world system:

* Universal selection criteria for international news have developed:

(1) Virtually all national media cover primarily events and key role players in their own regions.

(2) The USA and Western Europe are consistently and regularly covered in the news of all regions.

(3) After the USA and Western Europe, the focus is on hot-spot stories, that is news on political and other trouble spots on the global scene.

(4) Third World and socialist countries get the least coverage in world news. These countries only manage to get into the news when they are directly involved in hot-spot stories.

* Because the principal sources of news are located in North America and Europe, the orientation of international news is largely Western. Western Europe and Japan are considered to be “core regions” outside the US by Associated Press (Rampal 2007). Even news from the periphery is disseminated to the rest of the world through Western channels.
* The fact that international news coverage focuses mainly on the West and the developed world means that many parts of the world simply do not exist for viewers in the developed world, particularly in the North.
* Another consequence is stereotyping of people and countries in the developing parts of the world. This is exacerbated by the fact that the media concentrate mainly on disasters, conflict and corruption in the developing world and pay little attention to cultural, political and economic progress in these countries. Thus, they create an impression of constant chaos in the developing world.
* Global news also to create the impression that violence in the developing world differs from violence in the developed world: It is irrational, flagrant and overt. Corruption and violations of human rights, too, are presented as more far-reaching and systematic than in the developed world.
* “Primitiveness” is often the underlying theme in depictions (and stereotyping) of the developing world. This primitiveness is usually portrayed as either exotic or barbaric. By contrast, the developed world and the North in particular, are portrayed as the epitome of rationality. In the North – according to media stereotyping – science always triumphs over superstition, purposefulness over aimless activity, and human beings over nature. Let us state, upfront, that there are no longer primitive societies in our times, or barbaric for that matter so this stereotype has to be eliminated from the public space, by those who use it and those that want it removed from literature.
* The nature of news contents creates the impression that the world is strife-torn, far more so than it actually is. There is also an emphasis on the use of violence rather than more peaceful means. Such portrayals have a destabilising effect on both international and national conflict situations.
* News coverage of international events on the whole reveals a lack of depth and inclines to overgeneralise. There is a dearth of accurate, detailed, in-depth investigation of world events. Norris (1995) believes that this trend has been exacerbated by the advent of television news and other technological developments. Organisational changes, entailing reduced numbers of foreign correspondents, have led to the emergence of what are known as “parachute” journalists who traverse the globe from one crisis to the next and are not really able to provide the necessary contextual data, in-depth analyses and knowledgeable comment on the events they are covering.
* The focus of international news is on events rather than the processes and causes underlying these events, including the fact that international news is increasingly covered in the context of USA interests and that news in the developed region of Scandinavia are only covered in terms of crisis and are otherwise “practically non-existent” (Rampal 2007:123–124).
* International news focuses on the elite rather than on the masses.
* Other analysts are of the opinion that the dominance of the North is a major factor in the establishment of a universal consumer culture which jeopardises local cultures, national identity and sovereignty of nation states in many parts of the world.
* Both the content and flow of news serve to entrench the status quo, that is the division of countries into high and low status nations or centre and peripheral states.

The general conclusion from all this is that the current state of the flow and content of news does not provide an accurate, complete and comprehensive picture of objective realities in every corner of the world.

**4.6 The new media and the international flow of news**

One development that has been touted to change the process and content of international news flow is new media and its ability to transcend borders and to accommodate user interactivity. Rampal (2007:125) states: “The internet offers the best hope to developing countries seeking a low-cost vehicle for news distribution and a more balanced flow of news globally.”

International news flow is not the exclusive domain of the official agencies, publications and broadcasters anymore. Even individuals (private citizens and journalists themselves) can now be part of the international flow of news as the internet and even mobile phone has enabled people to contribute information and bypassing the “official”" gatekeepers traditionally associated with news (Pavlik 2000; Hermida 2010). Hamilton and Jenner (2004:311) call this an “amateur foreign correspondent”.

One of the most prolific tools of the participatory or citizen journalism is Twitter. The form of new media allows for micro-blogging where members can send messages called “tweets” of no longer than 140 words to the public or selected followers. These tweets can be sent and received via mobile phone or computer and allows for immediate updates on news events (Hermida 2010). With this, citizen journalism one is confronted with the fact that the “news” disseminated cannot be verified. Official news sources have responsibility towards the public for truth and objectivity. With a technology like Twitter, the responsibility falls on the individual and thus the possibility for untruths and rumours exist. In early 2010, rumours were spread via Twitter that former president Nelson Mandela had died. The story gained so much momentum that foreign news outlets such as ww.thestar.com from Canada reported on it (Haggarty 2011).

**CASE STUDY 4.5 News on the death of Osama bin Laden**

In early May 2011, a team of United States of America’s special forces, the Navy SEALs, conducted a raid on a house in the town of Abottabad in Pakistan. The outcome of the raid was the death of Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the attacks on the USA on September 11, 2001. In terms of the impact or role of new media in the international flow of this news event, the following report from Associated Press was published online on the South African based news website, www.news24.com:

**Social media tells of bin Laden death**

2011-05-03 22:24

**New York** – A soldier in Afghanistan learned about the death of Osama bin Laden on Facebook. A TV producer got a tip from comedian Kathy Griffin on **Twitter**. A blues musician received an email alert from The New York Times. And a woman found out as she absently scrolled through the internet on her smartphone while walking her dog.

In an illustration of how the information world has changed, many people learned through media formats or devices that weren't available a decade ago that the mastermind of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks had been killed.

“It just kind of spread like wildfire online,” said Stephen Vujevich, a student at Immaculata University in Pennsylvania. “It’s amazing to see how social media played a part in it.”

Vujevica was at his girlfriend’s house and both were on their laptops, when she said that many of her friends had updated their Facebook status to note bin Laden’s death in Pakistan. He went to Google News to find out that President Barack Obama had scheduled an address to the nation. He searched other sites to get news and credited Twitter with giving him the most immediate information.

Jaime Aguilar, a Denver musician, was at a friend’s house watching cable TV channel HBO when he saw the news alert on his smartphone.

A soldier who identified himself only as Carlos from Queens called New York sports radio station WFAN on Monday to note that he and his buddies in Afghanistan learned the news not from commanding officers, but from Facebook.

Angie Scharnhorst of Kansas had an early morning plane flight and if she wasn’t carrying her smartphone while walking her dog at 02:00, she said she probably wouldn’t have heard the news until later in the day on Monday.

Ashlee Edwards, a content producer for the CBS affiliate WBTW-TV in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was watching *The Tudors* with a friend when she saw Griffin's tweet urging her to “turn on CNN now” because the president was about to make an announcement.

**Liveblogged**

Abroad, the mediums of choice were much the same. Perhaps most prominently, one Twitter user told the story before the world knew what was happening – he lives near the compound in Pakistan where bin Laden was killed and became, in his words, “the guy who liveblogged the Osama raid without knowing it”.

Sohaib Athar, 33, is a computer programmer who was startled by a helicopter clattering in the early hours Monday. He tweeted about it, and soon the sole helicopter multiplied into several and gunfire and explosions rocked the air above the town. Athar’s tweets quickly garnered tens of thousands of followers as he apparently became the first in the world to describe the US operation to kill one of the world's most wanted terrorists.

Elsewhere, Shari Mai of Middlesex, England, said through Facebook that she heard the news via the *Financial Times*. Marina Ch of Moscow learned it through Facebook and The Associated Press. Monique Taylor, an Australian, said she was in London and the story was all over Facebook.

In Washington, it was before 22:00 (02:00 GMT) on Sunday that many Washington-based reporters were told to get to work because the President would speak. They were not told why.

At 10:25 (02:25 GMT), Keith Urbahn, the chief of staff for former Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tweeted: “So I’m told by a reputable person that they have killed Osama bin Laden. Hot damn.”

The word spread quickly, even as Urbahn subsequently tweeted that he “didn’t know if it’s true, but let’s pray it is”.

Mainstream news organisations began reporting that bin Laden was dead about 15 or 20 minutes later. Some, such as CNN and NBC, were tentative at first. Others, including ABC, were more definitive. Fox News Channel was joyful.

“This is the greatest night of my career,” said Fox's Geraldo Rivera. “The bum is dead, the savage who hurt us so grievously. I am so blessed, so privileged to be at my desk at this moment.”

**3 440 tweets per second**

The speed of social media struck some as an epochal moment in news coverage. “If anyone isn't a believer in Twitter as an amazingly powerful news vehicle, last night should convert you,” tweeted Chris Cillizza of the *Washington Post*’s political website The Fix.

Twitter said that it saw its highest sustained rate of tweets. There was an average of 3 440 tweets-per-second from 22:45 to 00:30 EST (02:45 to 04:30 GMT), according to the site. At 23:00 EST (03:00 GMT), there were 5 106 tweets per second.

Internet traffic surged above normal Sunday night usage. Akamail Technologies, which delivers about 20% of the world’s internet traffic, said that global page views for the roughly 100 news portals for which it delivers content peaked at more than 4,1 million page views around 23:00 EDT. CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC had nearly 15 million viewers between 23:00 and midnight on Sunday when Obama spoke, led by CNN,s 7,8 million. That time on a typical Sunday, the three networks are pulling in 1,7 million viewers, according to Nielsen.

There was a rush for information on mainstream online news sites, and sometimes it caused problems; *The New York Times* website was inaccessible for about 30 minutes shortly after the news broke due to the volume of traffic. ABC News said its digital properties had their busiest hour in their history Sunday night. MSNBC said its site had delivered 1,73 million streams of Obama’s speech on Sunday night.

At CNN, which reported at 22:00 EDT (02:00 GMT) that Obama would speak, it was another 45 minutes until the speech was connected to bin Laden, even as Wolf Blitzer provided some cryptic teases: “I have my suspicion on what the president is going to announce. Probably something we’ve been looking forward to, at least from a US perspective, for quite a while.” CNN’s John King eventually reported the news.

Blitzer conceded on Monday that he had a pretty good idea what the news would be when sources assured him that the president's news was not about Libya.

“I didn’t report it because you don't report something like that based on a suspicion, based on a hunch, based on your journalistic gut instinct,” Blitzer said. “You've got to get confirmation. And you can't just confirm from one source. You need at least two really excellent sources.”

- AP

**Source**: [http://www.news24.com/SciTech/News/Social-media-tells-of-bin-Laden-death-20110503#](http://www.news24.com/SciTech/News/Social-media-tells-of-bin-Laden-death-20110503)

Accessed on 20-05-2013

**ACTIVITY 4.10**

**Read one or two of these articles so that you may better understand the role played by social media and online forums on reporting international news. You can access these articles online:**

**Article A:**

Bosch, T. 2010. Digital journalism and online public spheres in South Africa. *Communicatio: The South African Journal of Communication Theory and Research* 36(2): 265 – 275.

Accessible online DOI : 10.1080/02500167.2010.485374

**Article B:**

Jordaan, M. 2013. Poke me, I’m a journalist: The impact of Facebook and Twitter on newsroom routines and cultures at two South African weeklies.

*Equi Novi: African Journalism Studies* 34(1): 21 – 35.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02560054.2013.767421>

**Article C:**

Hermida, A. 2010. Twittering the News: The emergence of ambience journalism. *Journalism Practice* 4(3): 297-308.

Accessible online at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjop20>

DOI: 10.1080/17512781003640703

Previously in this section, we dealt with the factors that influence international news flow. With the interactive nature of the internet, readers (or users) are more inclined to choose the news they want to follow. The factors that may influence an editor or senior journalist to investigate and report on an event may not be the same for someone who may choose from a wide range of topics and news suppliers or sources. Research by Tewksbury (2003:705–706) indicated that more than half of the respondents indicated that they access international news online, but in fact, only 17% accessed international news online once in the two months’ duration of the study.

Social media such as **Twitter** and **Facebook** will, however, not replace formal journalism. Users of these social media may be informed of a news event taking place, but will in all probability return to formal acknowledged sources of news for objective and decently researched news (Stassen 2010).

The internet has also served the needs of emerging news agencies. Indo-Asian News Sevice (IANS) was started in 1987 with one free subscriber and is based in New Delhi. Today it has subscribers in the Middle East, Australia, Canada and South Africa. Its client base consists of print media, broadcast media, websites, government ministries, foreign missions, the private sector and multilateral institutions (Welcome to IANS 2011) The internet has made it possible to bring news to its subscribers at a much lower rate (Rampal 2007:125).

Although the hope exists that the internet will assist in levelling the playing field when it comes to the periphery being fairly and adequately represented in international news via a new agency, there are a few stumbling blocks (Rampal 2007:123–125):

* There is a need for a sufficient amount of skilled journalists and the costs for maintaining the staff and other resources are extremely high.
* The new source of news will have to be extremely credible and be able to source quality information.
* The existing agencies are well established and it will take time and effort to reach the same level.

Despite the stumbling blocks, the hope remains that the internet, together with satellite television and digital radio, will help rectify the imbalance in reporting on countries on the periphery. Unfortunately, the issue of access to the new technology will hamper progress in the periphery. According to www.internetworldstats.com, by June 2010 only 10,8% of South Africa’s population had access to the internet. Cost and available technology remain inhibiting factors in the developing world where countries seem to be engaged in an everlasting race to catch up with the rest of the world and technology.

**CASE STUDY 4.6 Reuters appoints a social networks editor**

There is probably no better illustration of the important role that social networks are starting to play in the international flow of news as the fact that one of the big global players, Reuters, decided to appoint a social networks editor. According to Henriksson (2011), the task of the newly appointed editor for social networks at Reuters will be to integrate social network platforms such as Facebook and Twitter – where news nowadays often break first – with other Reuters platforms. The social networks editor will furthermore need to direct journalists to screen social networks for leads and new or additional information on current events.

Henriksson (2011) regard the appointment of a social networks editor at Reuters to be in line with development at other news organisations. Henriksson holds that news organisations are more and more recognising the important tools for news gathering that social networks offer to journalists. The more so as research evidence points to the fact that social networks are increasingly playing an integral role in people’s lives.

**ACTIVITY 4.11**

If you would like to read more about how the internet impacts on international news, you are welcome to read **one or some** of these online articles:

1. Palmer, M & Nicey, J. 2012. Social media and the freedom of the press: a long-term perspective from within international news agencies (AFP, Reuters). *Journal for Communication Studies* 5 no 1(9): 107-123.
2. Hills, J & Michalis, M. 2000. The internet: a challenge to public service broadcasting? *International Communication Gazette*, 62:477.

<http://gaz.sagepub.com/content/62/6/477>

1. Berger, G. 2009. How the internet impacts on international news: exploring paradoxes of the most global medium in a time of “hyperlocalism”. *The International Communication Gazette,* 71(5):355–371.

Article: 10.1177/1748509104977

<http://gaz.sagepub.com/content/71/5/355>

1. Zhang, W & Lallana, EC. 2013. Youth, ICTs, and civic engagement in Asia. *The International Communication Gazette,* 75(3):249–252.
2. Lim, JYB. 2013. Video blogging and youth activism in Malaysia. *The International Communication Gazette,* 75(3):300–321.
3. David, CC. 2013. ICTs in political engagement among youth in the Philippines. *The International Communication Gazette,* 75(3):322–337.

From the above articles, it is evident that new media such as the internet and social media had changed how international news is produced, and by who, transmitted and received by global audiences.

Another crucial aspect that is considered when producing international news, is language translation. We briefly analyse the importance of this issue next.

**4.7 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE TRANSLATION IN INTERNATIONAL NEWS PRODUCTION AND FLOWS**

Translation means converting messages and sentences, spoken or written, from one language into another or other different languages so that people who speak or read these languages can understand the story. There are many languages in the world and stories are translated from one language to many other languages, depending on who knows the story, who wants the story and where they are located. The main reason for stories to be translated into different languages of the world arises from the “the need to deal with linguistic diversity in news production and the simultaneous circulation of news in different languages” (Biesla 2007:136). News agency do not necessarily employ news translators; translation is nor conceived as separate from other journalistic tasks of writing up and editing, and is mainly assumed by a news editor, who receives news from journalists, and edits them, sometimes translates them and sends the news to a specific newswire. Both the processes of “editing and translation imply the tasks of news selection, correction, verification, completion, development or reduction that will give texts the final form in which they appear in the newswire” (Biesla 2001:136). News translation is thus an important part of journalistic work and is subject to the same requirements of genre and style that govern the production of news stories. Journalistic factors such as time, space and genre are as equally important in impacting on the writing of a news story as are linguistic and cultural aspects from which that story is viewed or interpreted by a journalist. Some features that characterise the nature of news translation and distinguish it from other forms of inter-lingual transfer and exchange have been pointed out as being the following (Biesla 2007):

1. The main objective of news translators is to transmit information.
2. News translators translate for a mass audience; consequently, a clear, simple and direct language should be used when translating a story.
3. News translators translate for a specific geographical, temporal and cultural context – their job is also conditioned by the medium in which they work.
4. News translators are subject to important limitations such as time and space – this could have an impact on how short or long a story can be translated or altered.
5. News translators are usually “backtranslators” and proofreaders, which makes them versatile news makers as they report and translate different types of news from sport to finance and the economy. This factor also requires that translators should rewrite texts to make them suitable for the new language and context according to the medium and rules thereof (writing guidelines and principles).

The textual interventions (Biesla 2007) or editorial activities that news translators mainly engage in include the following:

1. Change of title and lead: titles and story leads are usually changed to suit the people (or publication) who speak or read the new language that the story is translated into.
2. Long details of the story and unnecessary parts of a story are eliminated to save time (on television) and space (in print and online media).
3. Addition of new background information if the new target audience requires some background information on a story that they are getting to know about for the first time.
4. Change the paragraphs to suit the new readers and context (or country, or publication).
5. Summarising the whole story if such a need arises, especially in international broadcasting where some time is taken up by international advertising.

Stories are also translated in Africa, to suit the different audiences using the African media operating in African countries. African countries and journalists thereof, report international news in certain ways and are also reported about in international news in some of the ways described in this next section of this Learning Unit.

**ACTIVITY 4.12**

Write a short essay which describes how a translated international news story can differ from an original of that story before it was translated.

What changes can a journalist or an editor effect to that story? Get a practical example of a translated story to illustrate your points of view.

**4.8 AFRICA AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS FLOWS**

The largest parts of Africa, with the possible exception of South Africa which many analysts regard as a semi-peripheral country, form part of the periphery (McPhail 2010). As such, Africa has mostly been on the receiving end of international news flows if the models of international news flows of Mowlana (1997) are taken into account. Not only are the contents of news flowing to Africa predominantly centred on the West, but news on developing regions and Africa itself probably reflect western biases, as identified by Mowlana (1997) and Van Ginneken (1998) as discussed in section 5.5. Eribo (1999), states that it is not only that Africa receives a distorted view from the world through the global news agencies; countries on the Africa continent also receive a distorted view of themselves.

Although all the global “wholesalers” as well as many of the “retailers” nowadays have dedicated African desks with personnel and journalistic staff that specialise on Africa, it is doubtful whether these desks with their roots still strong in the west can provide a nuanced picture of events in Africa. There have furthermore been few attempts from Africa itself to rectify this situation, namely to counterbalance global news flows by producing and packaging news on Africa with an African perspective and to distribute these to the rest of the world (Ndlovu 2003).

Channel Africa, a radio broadcasting initiative of the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), represents one of the few attempts to at least distribute news from Africa to Africa (Channel Africa ... [sa]). SABC Africa, the television service of the SABC to Africa, which not only broadcasted television news, but also entertainment, was ceased in 2008 due to the fact that the channel performed badly on the DStv satellite television (SABC Africa ... [sa]). Another contributing factor was the financial problems that the SABC experienced at the time.

The attempts of the SABC in providing news to Africa from Africa can be recommended. There were for example instances, such as the signing of the peace accord in the Republic of the Congo in 2002, where SABC Africa gave African audiences access to life broadcasting of important events on their continent. The broadcasting of this particular event also amounts to positive news about peace initiatives in Africa (Ndlovu 2003).

However, Ndlovu (2003) poses the question whether South Africa’s one-sided attempts of expanding its broadcasting into Africa could be regarded as media imperialism and electronic colonialism – yet this time on the hands of another African country. There have indeed been voices of concern in this regard. For example, in a strongly critical article, Khandji (2001) voices concerns that there is a tendency among the national elite in Namibia to rely more on Channel Africa for news outside the country than on the national broadcaster of Namibia. On the other hand, the research of Demissie (2007) indicates that news from state-owned national broadcasters in Africa often do not provide the full picture of events in Africa. South Africa should nevertheless guard against becoming a one-sided voice of Africa without the co-operation of other African countries. A concerted effort from a number of African countries is probably necessary to counteract global distortions of Africa in international news flows.

**CASE STUDY 4.7 Channel Africa**

Channel Africa evolved from Radio RSA that had strong ties with the former apartheid government (Channel Africa ... [sa]). Since the advent of a new democratic dispensation, the radio station had to redefine and reposition itself to come in line with the democratic values of the new dispensation. The vision and mission of the new station set itself to become a major role-player in transcontinental (across the African continent) and international radio broadcasting. The aim of the station is furthermore to provide radio broadcasting on the African context with an African perspective (Ndlovu 2003).

Currently, Channel Africa is broadcasting from three platforms – short wave, satellite and the internet – in six languages spoken on the African continent (English, French, Portuguese, Chewa, Swahili and Silozi). The broadcasts cover southern, eastern, central and western Africa, but can be heard as far as London. The internet broadcasts can, however, be heard all over the world.

**CASE STUDY 4.8: Covering the Ethiopian elections of 2005**

Demissie (2007) compared the agendas and frames employed by two news agencies, the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) and Reuters, in their coverage of the 2005 Ethiopian elections as well as the immediate post-election period.

The 2005 elections were the third general elections in Ethiopia after the inception of a parliamentary form of government and a constitution. The elections proved to be a dramatic event at national, regional and even at global levels. The pre-election campaigns were fierce and open with a huge turnout of active public participation and the involvement of international observers. This was the first time in the country’s history of holding elections where political candidates, voters, the media and elections observers were free to operate and be critical of the ruling party. This was all part of a decisive step on the part of the Ethiopian government towards a pluralistic democracy.

Election day on 15 May 2005 was calm and peaceful with a huge voter turnout, despite the fact that voters had to wait in long queues. However, things started to change on the day after the elections when rumours of large-scale election fraud started to circulate. Although the incoming results indicated that the ruling party had lost, both the ruling party and the opposition claimed victory. On 6 June, students at the Addis Ababa University started to strike as they believed that the elections were rigged. This started a series of strikes, boycotts and election violence. Although the opposition parties called on the government to respect the vote, the government started to arrest opposition leaders followed by mass arrests. In the days that followed, more than 200 people were killed, many more were wounded and about 30 000 people were imprisoned.

Comparisons of how Reuters and ENA covered these events indicated marked differences in their agendas and framing (Demissie 2007:2). While ENA focused on the election process and questions whether the elections were free and fair, Reuters focused on the protests, violence and arrests. Whereas ENA framed the election process itself as
“democratic”, “legitimate” and “constitutional”, Reuters framed the election process as “marred by manipulation”, “unsuccessful”, and characterised by a “brutal crackdown”. ENA framed the government leaders as visionary and indomitable figures and the actions of the opposition as unconstitutional. Reuters, on the other hand, framed the opposition, the voters and the victims of violence as legitimate and the government as unconstitutional.

The conclusion can be drawn that the coverage of both news agencies was skewed by their institutional and regional orientations (Demissie 2007). As a global news agency, Reuters focused one-sidedly on the violence and the failure of yet another election in Africa. Its coverage reflected the pessimistic view of Africa that can be regarded as a characteristic of global news on developing regions. ENA, as the official government-owned national news agency on the other hand, reflected the viewpoint of the government of the day and did not take the whole of the Ethiopian population and their will as expressed in the election into account. Thus, although it can be disputed whether the 2005 Ethiopian election and its outcome was democratic and free and fair, the question can also be disputed whether the news coverage of the two agencies involved in covering the events can be regarded as fair and objective and whether news on the election as disseminated by both agencies served the purposes of promoting democracy in Ethiopia.

**4.9 SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

The issue of access to information and communication made its way into the broadcasting and telecommunications laws of South Africa, namely, the Independent Broadcasting Act (IBA) Act of 1993, the Broadcasting Act of 1999, the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the IBA Act of 2000, as well as subsequent amendments to the Acts (Mmusi 2005, in Lesame 2005:101). These Acts, promoted aspects of free speech and liberalisation of the broadcasting and telecommunications markets, among other objectives. Lloyd (2013) states that South African news media have become among “the most concentrated in the world”, in the “post-1994 democratic era” (you can read Lloyd’s article, if interested, at <http://cima.ned.org/publications> - CIMA is the Centre for International Media Assistance).

This “media concentration” cited by Lloyd could be because there are many new media in South Africa and competition is vibrant in newspapers, TV channels as well as other online and offline news publications with new audiences who mostly read news on mobile phone applications. Liberalisation of markets is a critical aspect in any communications market because it promotes more than few businesses to enter the communications market to do business, instead of this market being dominated by a few conglomerates of fat cat monopolists. Read more about the processes of liberalisation, monopolisation, privatisation and regulation of the South African communications market in this article, if you would like to improve your knowledge of how these three communication policies have come about in South Africa and also what they mean to the industry and country:

Lesame, Z. 2000. The new independent communications authority of South Africa: its challenges and implications for telecommunications liberalisation in the country. *Communicatio* 26(2): 28-36.

**Google the journal *Communicatio: The South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, online, and access the article, in the 26 edition of 2000, on the stated pages.**

What is clear about South African media, over the 20 years of democracy (2004 to 2014) is that many new media companies have been established as a result of **globalisation of markets**; **ICT regulation** which promotes **universal service policy and broadband policy** (i.e., provision of broadcasting and telecommunications services to all); **promotion of freedom of speech** which is enshrined in the **South Africa Constitution** (while people and media exercise free speech, online or offline; this free speech must be responsible, nation building and promotion positive national values – media insulting the President in their content and articles are working against free speech and abusing democracy because democracy does not mean disrespect a President but means respect your President); **technology, use of technology for news distribution internationally and innovation** (such as all the media that have cropped up online and individuals who are overnight journalists and break news online in videos (YouTube) and commentary – e.g., as happened in North Africa – Egypt - and MENA or Middle East uprisings); **liberalisation of the communications markets**, and **business growth** in general as business makes most news, in addition to sport and entertainment, social and political issues as well.

Some of the (**some** **new)** TV channels in South Africa are found on satellite television (DsTV) and include:

* ANN7 or Channel 405 on DsTV
* SABC International News Channel – Channel 405 on DsTV
* eNews – Channel 194 (national ) and Channel 403 on DsTv and the international news powerhouses and channels that we have always watched since the opening up of broadcasting, such as
* CNN – on Channel 401 on DsTv
* SABC 1, 2 and 3 on Channels 191, 192 and 193 consecutively on DsTv and
* BBC – Channel 400 on DsTV.

Some countries develop laws and policies that may disturb or limit news gathering and distribution by journalists and media. China has been mentioned by some as having some media laws that supress freedom of expression – conduct research on that issue and learn more about it online.

The South African government also recently (2011 to 2013) has tried to develop a new law to curb the abuse of free speech by citizens and media, for example a Bill was developed in South Africa in the recent past, which was criticised by some media and civil society organisations as a “Secrecy Bill” because government wants the Bill (or Act if it becomes law ultimately) to stop certain kinds of information involving state officials to be published or broadcast. This could have a direct impact on news publication in newspapers and broadcasting on TV stations as journalists will not write or say whatever they wish to say or write about government officials, especially concerning issues of national security.

**You are welcome to conduct more research for yourself on the issue and Bill as it is widely available in news articles and Internet debates by civil society organisations, South African political opposition parties and other individuals and institutions who oppose the Bill.**

**International organisations and impact on news issues**

International organisations have had an impact on the development of communications policies (and consequently on news delivery) in various ways have also impacted on technology development which has had a huge impact on promotion of international news worldwide. Theseinternational organisations have also facilitated financial and goods transactions between member countries, and therefore, have been critical in promoting **economic, political** and other forms of **globalisation**.Some of these organisations are the following (they are not the only ones; find out what the others are):

**Free trade, trade tariffs and international organisations**

The concept of free trade was advocated by Adam Smith as far back as 1776. Adam Smith was a Scottish economist who is known mainly for his book, Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations. According to Levy-Livermore (1998:199) free trade means that countries can trade with each other to obtain products and services that they cannot produce for themselves. This system is lucrative for a country if it has a competitive edge in something, that is if it can manufacture something more cheaply than other countries can. However, the free trade system means that a commercial transaction is usually more profitable for one party than for the other.

That is why countries use trade tariffs to protect themselves against competitors. Thus developing countries impose import duties to make it more costly for local businesses to import products. In this way they protect their own emerging industries. Developed countries also use import duties to protect their sophisticated technologies and industries against competition. This impedes free trade and increasingly complicates international trade (ibid.).

The role of international organisations is to act as intermediaries between countries and create a climate in which countries can negotiate transactions that are profitable to all parties.

**FEEL FREE TO VISIT THE WEB SITES OF THESE ORGANISATIONS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION PROCESSES AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

* **The International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

The IMF was established on 31 December 1945 with a view to promoting international monetary cooperation, facilitating the growth of international trade, promoting stable exchange rates and making funds available to members temporarily to enable them to pay their international debts. Over the years the role of the IMF has changed. Nowadays developed countries prefer to borrow on the international capital market. The IMF has become the major provider of credit to developing countries (Rodgers 1998:205-208).

* **The World Bank**

The World Bank was established in 1944 to help reconstruct the European and Japanese economies after the devastation of World War II. Later the bank's focus shifted to providing long-term loans to developing countries. The funds were used mainly to finance projects to create public infrastructure for these countries. In the 1970s the emphasis shifted once again to combatting poverty and the bank started funding projects for small-scale agriculture, housing, sanitation, education and health care (Rodgers 1998:205--208).

* **The World Trade Organisation (WTO)**

The main outcome of the Uruguay round was the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Its purpose is to settle trade disputes by means of a two thirds or three quarters majority vote rather than by means of an unanimous decision, as is required by GATT. Under the latter agreement talks could reach a deadlock if one country did not agree with another (unanimity is not reached) (Rodgers 1998:211).

* **The United Nations Commission on Trade and Development**

Initially developing countries did not play a significant role in GATT, because many of them felt that the agreement was doing nothing to further their interests. In 1964 they established the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The commission achieved its aim: that of persuading GATT members of the special needs of developing countries. These countries are given preference on the markets of developed countries and are also exempted from the GATT prohibition of quotas and export subsidies.

**Role of trade blocs**

A trade bloc is a group of countries that impose lower duties on imports from member countries than on those from other countries. This encourages trade between member countries. At present there are more than 20 trade blocs around the world, the largest being the EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

* **European Union**

The European Union (formerly known as the European Economic Community) was established in 1957 with five member countries: Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. In due course several other European countries joined: the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Finland and Austria. Recently some East European countries applied for membership as well. In 1992 the USA, Canada and Mexico signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (Rodgers 1998:212--217).

This does not mean that the West dominates world trade. According to Schwab and Smadja (1995:99) the centre of world economic activities is moving in the direction of Asia. It was predicted that by the year 2000 Asia would at the very least be competing with NAFTA and the EU on an equal footing and might even overtake these two blocs. Unfortunately, as you will see later in this section, these predictions did not allow for the hazards and challenges of economic globalisation.

* **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was established in August 1992 specifically to look after the trade interests of Southern African countries. The founder members were Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. After the democratic election in 1994 South Africa joined as well. Subsequently Mauritius, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Seychelles joined the fold. The SADC's main aim is to foster development and economic growth and improve the living standards of people in the region. Each member country assumes responsibility for development in a specific economic sector. South Africa is in charge of the financial and investment sector (South African Development Community ...[sa]).

**Hazards and challenges attached to economic globalisation**

A major hazard attached to the borderless economy (in which countries trade, borrow, lend and invest mutually) is that if one country or region experiences an economic crisis the effects can spread across the world. An example is the global economic crisis between 2008 and 2009 which started in developed countries and had a impact on developing countries.

Another example, in Africa, which made global news are the political uprisings in Egypt (2011), and other North Africa countries (and the MENA uprisings) which had devastating economic effects on that country and region.

Howard (1998:50) mentions other dangers attached to economic globalisation which are as follows:

* **Overproduction**

One of the challenges presented by increasing international trade is to balance demand and supply (Smith 1998:125). More and more companies are focussing their production on international markets but are concentrating only on supply. As a result global supply is exceeding global demand. One example is the motor industry. Grieder (in Howard 1998:50) pointed out that by the year 2000 the total supply of car manufacturers world-wide would have reached 79 million vehicles, whereas the global demand would be for 57 million only.

* **Competition**

The greater openness of the borderless economy stimulates competition and the economic hegemony of the USA and Europe is increasingly threatened by emerging countries in Asia and South America.

* **Labour**

One of the ideas behind multinational corporations (MNCs) is to shift production to countries where labour is cheap. In the process, however, there is large-scale exploitation and there is

growing pressure on multinational corporations from various quarters to improve working conditions in their overseas plants.

* **Global leadership**

In the discussion of the driving forces behind economic globalisation we referred to the dwindling influence of the nation-state. Despite the fact that the world economy is dominated by a handful of giant multinational corporations, they do not do so in an ethical framework. Most of them operate purely in their own interests.

**Criticism of economic globalisation theory**

Although the notion of globalisation (which includes economic globalisation) is recognised world-wide, there are some sceptics. The debate is mainly about the actual extent of economic globalisation. Kleinknecht and Ter Wengel (1998:637) made a study of economic globalisation by investigating three aspects of it: international trade in goods, direct foreign investment and the technological strategies of multinationals.

As part of their research Kleinknecht and Ter Wengel (1998:641-644) studied the trade patterns (imports and exports) of European countries since 1960. They observed a "Europeanising" trend. In other words, although European countries traded with other countries, they largely confined their trade to members of the EU. Hence the EU may be regarded as a closed economy. These authors also found that, although capital flows were increasing globally, European countries were investing far more in their fellow European member countries than in other parts of the world. An analysis of the technological strategies of multinationals by Patel and Pavitt (in Kleinknecht & Ter Wengel 1998:644) shows that these organisations continue to focus their production of technology predominantly on their local markets.

Although the study by Kleinknecht and Ter Wengel (1998) was of limited scope, the findings highlight a trend, namely that international trade is conducted mainly **within trade blocs** (e.g., those in Europe, the USA and Asia) rather than between blocs. One could easily fall into the error of thinking that economic globalisation means that all countries on earth trade with every other country. But even though economic globalisation means that markets around the world have become more accessible and are becoming ever more so, there is nothing like a totally integrated world economy at this stage.

The trend identified in the above study could be changing by 2013 and beyond, as trade now has increased between developed and developing countries (e.g., South Africa and the United States, as stated by President Barack Obama during his State visit to South Africa in June 2013), and also between other emerging economies, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries. Lesame (2013), in her research on growth of trade, political cooperation and communication between the BRICS countries found out that these aspects had dramatically increased between these countries since the first BRICS Summit and the 4th BRICS Summit in India in 2012 (see Figure 4.6); and by the 5th BRICS Summit in Durban South Africa in 2013, there has been significant business deals between these countries, as shown in Figure 4.7.

**Figure 4.6: India – New Delhi 2012 BRICS Summit Welcome to BRICS Leaders**



**Source: Shapiro (2013; Zapiro’s real name is Shapiro)**

**Figure 4.6** is constructedby South African cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro, known as Zapiro (2013) depicts the picture of the presidents of the BRICS nations in 2010, Brazil President **Dilma Rousseff**, former Russian president **Dmitry Medvedev**, Indian Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh**, former Chinese president **Hu Jintao** and South African President **Jacob** **Zuma**. South Africa joined BRICS in 2010. One of the reasons South Africa is regarded as a “briquette” in the cartoon is that the economy of South Africa was weaker (in terms of GDP) than that of the BRIC countries and the South African economy does not grow as fast as those of the BRIC countries, with South Africa having more unemployment, joblessness and poverty than the BRIC countries. Zapiro, therefore, suggested that South African learn from BRIC about issues of job creation, technology innovation, infrastructure development, business acceleration, small and medium business creation and development and economic development as a whole.

**You are welcome to interpret the cartoon in any way you want as people interpret things like cartoons differently. I have found out that some people may like the cartoon, while some people do not like it.**

**You may share what you think about the cartoon on the communication forums we use for this module online, to share your ideas and views on it with all of us.**

**Figure 4.7: Intra-BRICS trade**



Source of Figure 4.7: Lund (2013: 30), in Lesame (2013); graphic reproduced by David Wigston (2013); permission to reproduce granted by the Avusa Syndication (Kgaphola 2013)

**The social domain of globalisation and global news**

This issue is discussed in more detail by Rofhiwa Felicia Mukhudwana, in **Learning Unit 6**, which interrogates how Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter facilitate the flows of global news between people in different countries and also promote social communication or globalisation between individuals located in different parts and continents of the world.

In the past social relations and the concept of community were largely confined to face-to-face communication and interaction between people in the same geographical space. Such communication centred mainly on issues of local importance and was facilitated by a common local culture. Examples of this kind of interaction are encounters in a coffee bar; interaction in the village square; shaking hands when signing a contract where all the parties attend in person.

**ACTIVITY 4.13**

All people have something to say about news happening in their countries. As one of these people, have you commented in a newspaper, TV or Internet about national or global news that you think affect some or most people in your country? If yes, how have you contributed to these processes of news gathering and distribution on a national and perhaps global level? If, no, when are you going to start contributing to these discussions? What are you waiting for, as an international communication scholar?

There are many issues you can comment and contribute towards advancing, for example, the United **Nations Millenium Development Goals (MGDs**) can sometimes be big news in developing countries that members of civil society should contribute to as they propose how countries can develop their own people out of poverty, joblessness, lack of education and out of other social and economic ills that trouble many developing countries.

**Emergence of the "global village"**

Nowadays neither dialogue and interaction nor the community is confined to just one geographical space. The compression of time and space which accompanies globalisation is causing a restructuring of social relations as well, in the sense that they are extended globally. This means that communication relations are no longer restricted to a particular place but are dispersed globally or spatially. In effect we have all become part of a nonspatial, unrestricted community. The existence of such a community --- unconfined by distance, national borders or other physical obstacles --- is made possible by modern information and communication technology which maintains communication relations irrespective of time and space.

Social globalisation implies that the communication scholar Marshall McLuhan's (1964) concept of the world as a "global village" is in fact being realised. Frederick (1993:119) points out, however, that McLuhan was overly idealistic. He believed that the miracles of electronic communication would cause all social, ethnic and racial divisions to disappear and ultimately create a homogeneous global society. But, Frederick points out, communication in the global village differs from that in a local context. Communication via electronic media is often impersonal, fleeting and mostly indirect, whereas in a local context it is marked by personal contact and interaction. Another point to consider is that most people's daily lives, despite their awareness that they are part of a global scene, are tied to their local geographical space. Operating from that space, they then incorporate elements of other societies and global society into their personal lives.

**ACTIVITY 4.14**

Do you feel part of the "global village", e.g. through use of the Internet or social media? How do you communicate with the "global village" and how does it communicate with you?

**The cultural domain of globalization and global news**

**Culture is news**, nationally and globally. There are many international stories that flow between news makers and international broadcasters which have a cultural nature and involve aspects of translation and use of many languages to relay them to global audiences and readers.

Nowhere are the horizontal and vertical dimensions of globalisation more apparent than in the cultural domain. The cultural state of the world is intrinsically linked with the flow of information and knowledge, which in its turn may be described as cultural flow. Appadurai (1990:2) distinguishes between various processes which influence culture, both global and local. These processes are as follows:

* flow of individuals (tourists, migrants, refugees, and anyone else travelling around the world for one reason or another);
* the spread of technologies;
* flow of capital – consider **Bloomberg** as a Global Financial News Leader (Google Bloomberg and learn about what news they work with and how they do what they do) – see for example some of their stories about medisa imperism and successful media businesses and owners in South Africa at these online news stories;

Bloomberg. 2013a. *Meet Koos Bekker, South Africa’s Newest Billionnaire*.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/video/meet-koos-bekker-south-africa-s-newest-billionnaire>

Bloomberg. 2013b. *South African Bekker Becomes Billionnaire with China Media.*

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-19/south-african-bekker-becomes-billionai>...

Koos Bekker. 2013. *Who’s Who SA*.

<http://whoswho.co.za/koos-bekker-1137>

Harber, A. 2013. *Mampoer – Gorilla in the room: He’ll earn a billion this year*.

<http://mampoer.co.za/anton-harber-titles/gorilla-in-the-room?gclid=CIa9jqbsn7oCFX>...

Naspers Web Site 2010. *Naspers Structure, Technology and Media Services*. Located at:

<http://www.naspers.com>

* flow of information
* the spread of political values and ideas (e.g. principles of freedom, democracy and human rights).

To these factors and developments, Waters (1995:126) adds:

* the dissemination of religious values and ideas;
* Emergence of a homogeneous consumer culture

In the past, some believed that the increased information and news flow between people located in different countries of the world --- and especially the advent of the Internet --- would lead to the emergence of a **homogeneous global society and culture**. Nowadays one can in fact speak of the global spread and creation of a homogeneous American/Western consumer culture (Tehranian & Tehranian 1997:132; Waters 1995:140). Terms like "Americanisation", "Western cultural imperialism" and the "Coca-Colanisation" of the world are often used in this regard consider Figures 4.8 in this regard. The spread of this **consumer culture** is facilitated by the following factors:

* the mammoth expansion of world trade and concomitant dissemination of advertising for the mass market;
* rapid development of information and communication technology and other technological innovations;
* the mass media (and people's tendency to imitate portrayals and characters in these media);
* the global dissemination of electronic entertainment manufactured by a few multinationals;
* the spread of commercially packaged cultural products like foodstuffs (e.g., Coca-Cola and McDonald's hamburgers), clothing (e.g., famous jeans brands and Nike sports equipment), popular music, and many other international products and brands;
* the spread of a liberal political climate and secular values.

**Figure 4.8: Coca Cola in Mecca, Saudi Arabia**



Source: Retrieved online – see online source in Thatelo (2013 –see Learning Unit 5 of this module)

Another result of the consumer culture is the popularisation of "classy" or "elite" cultural products. A good example is international music and CDs that people anywhere where they travel and also within their own countries. Some people even buy global music more than they buy national music. Consider the success if music icons such as Michael Jackson, Beyonce, Bruce Springsteen, Tina Turner, Lil Wayne, Drake, Jay Z, Nicky Minaj, 2 Chains, Future, Miley Cyrus, Lucky Dube, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and others.

The growth of international movies as global news also falls in this category of culture as global news – consider this global movie – in Figure 4.9, which tells the story of South African Father and Global Icon, **Nelson Mandela’s** story, culture and life – this is the story of the South African culture; it is South African global news captured in a movie starring movie greats, national and American or global. The **Nelson Mandela** international political victory story has also been told in other global movies, newspapers and powerful magazines, as you can see in Figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9: Mandela Movie: Long Walk to Freedom**



Source: SouthAfrica.info

<http://www.southafrica.info/pls/cms/show_gallery_sa_info?p_gid=4783&p_site_id=38>

Accessed on 10 October 2013

This Mandela movie was released in 2013 and is still big global news. American movie star **Idris Elba** (seen in the Mandela movie poster in Figure 4. 9) acted the role of Nelson Mandela in this movie, while South African actress **Terry Pheto** plays Madiba’s (Mandela’s) first wife **Evelyn Mase Mandela** and **Naomi Harris** (US actress) played veteran political icon and South African sweetheart **Winnie Madikizela-Mandela**. Other South African movie stars in this film are **Tony Kgoroge**, **Riaad Moosa** (playing political icon **Amhed Kathrada**) and **Lindiwe Matshikiza**.

If you have not yet watched the movies, find them in **movie rental shops**, hire one and watch it; or buy the movie online to watch at home. If you do not yet **shop online**, ask someone to help you and teach you how you can shop online. Ask a good person that you trust so that you do not lose some money or get cheated somehow. There is a lot of **cybercrime** out there.

**Figure 4.10: Nelson Mandela in Time Magazine**



Source: SouthAfrica.info

<http://www.southafrica.info/pls/cms/show_gallery_sa_info?p_gid=4783&p_site_id=38>

Accessed on 10 October 2013

Mandela is not only a hero in South Africa and Mandela but in most countries of the world who believe in the human right principles that he stands for. He is a global symbol of leadership, courage, reconciliation, promotion of human dignity and respect, as well as a unifier of people and symbol of global peace.

Another major South African story which made global news in international media is that of South African son of the soil, politician and historian, Steven Bantu Biko, known as Steve Biko, a story told by Americans and South Africans globally through the movie, Cry Freedom – see **Figure 4.11**.

**Figure 4.11: Cry Freedom; The Steve Biko Story and Movie**



Source: SouthAfrica.info

<http://www.southafrica.info/pls/cms/show_gallery_sa_info?p_gid=4783&p_site_id=38>

Accessed on 10 October 2013

You can read widely about Steve Biko’s principles and legacy on the Internet and via the Steve Biko Foundation Web site. Much has been written about him over the years.

**Wrapping Up this last Section and Learning Unit**

Finally on **consumer culture** and its impact on **global news**, it should be noted that the consumerism is big business and big business is big news, globally and national. The term "consumer culture" denotes more than just the use or consumption of certain goods and services. The consumer culture has its origins among influential groups who, in their **capitalist endeavour**, encourage consumers to "want" more than they realistically "need". Their success lies in the fact that the items and goods concerned do not relate only to actual need satisfaction or certain material values. These goods and items have also acquired major symbolic significance. To many people they symbolise what is "modern" and "with it", things that people must have to keep up with modern developments and radiate an image of affluence and success. Thus consumption has become a way in which individuals express themselves and define their identity. As a result both need structures and individuals' self-images are transformed and consumption is linked directly with identity. Sources of social differentiation such as lineage, class and political affiliation are largely replaced by concepts like fashion, taste and lifestyle. One's social position and status are determined by the extent to which one sports the latest fads and lifestyle of the consumer culture. In the global cultural scene the adage "the clothes maketh the man" acquires new meaning. However, in reality what we know is **that manners, not clothes**, maketh the man.

(1) The "stage" is global and no longer national, that is, it is no longer confined by the boundaries of nation-states.

(2) Formerly trade and the power of nation-states were the driving forces behind globalisation. Nowadays globalisation is driven by technologies and capital flow.

(3) The influence that declined was mainly that of the governments of nation-states and of local government (e.g., provincial and municipal).

(4) Virtually all the new "stars" on the world scene, that is institutions with a major influence on world events, come from the private sector.

(5) Transnational corporations (TNCs); that is large multinational companies (MNCs) and smaller businesses whose activities extend across the borders of existing nation-states. Special influence groups; these groups should be distinguished from existing governments, TNCs and traditional NGOs and may include armies, members of the police, terrorist groups, mafias, secret societies, religious institutions, fundamentalist religious groups and groups like the Green movement which focus on specific issues. Note that their influence is often unofficial and that they use technologies such as the Internet to mobilise worldwide and thus circumvent the authority of nation-states. Intergovernmental organisations (e.g., the EU, United Nations/UN, SADC, and so on) are attempts by governments to compete more effectively on the global scene by joining forces. Whereas the influence of national governments has declined, the influence of these political power blocs have increased. Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs); these form a large and highly heterogeneous group whose only common attribute is that they are not linked with governments. NGOs are usually organised around specific themes (e.g., human rights, democratisation and conflict management) and often use the media to bring issues to the public's notice, especially in countries like South Africa where human rights of people have been abused in racist policies such as apartheid and its current effects on people and society in general which, athough fading slowly, will take many decades to erode.

(6) A major criticism of this article is that the author focusses exclusively on economic and political globalisation. As a result the significant impact of social and cultural globalisation is overlooked. In addition it is confined to the horizontal dimension of globalisation and does not consider the effect of the paradoxical process of globalisation versus localisation. The author also fails to mention a large number of role players, such as individuals (e.g., those who communicate globally via the Internet), migrants, tourists, academics with international links, manufacturers of cultural products like television programmes, and ethnic and cultural groups.

**International communication, globalisation and global news**

In its simplest form communication is the active transmission of "something". The word "communication" derives from a Latin word meaning "to share". What is shared is usually a signal or message containing information which may inform, persuade, propagate, publicise or advertise, mislead or exhort in the case of propaganda and/or entertain in the case of entertainment news and information. The global information or news may assume the form of **words**, **sounds**, **images** and, nowadays, **digital data** as well --- or a combination of any of these.

* **Definition of international communication**

International communication may be defined as communication between two or more parties (individuals, institutions and/or organisations) who are normally resident or located in different geographical regions. This communication is made possible by removing the obstacles of time and space which prevent people who are geographically remote from one another from communicating (Taylor 1997:22).

**Role of technology in global flow of news and information**

The common fundamental attribute of international communication as described in Learning Unit 1. It is technology which overcomes the obstacles of time and space, permits almost instant international communication and thus facilitates the forms of flow discussed above. The development of technology --- from the early beginnings of transport technology and the transmission of Morse code via the telegraph to the telephone, radio, television and the digital super highway --- has revolutionised the speed at which information flows around the world. The influence of this revolution is often compared with that of the Industrial Revolution (Taylor 1997:2).

Frederick (1993:58) divides modern information and communication technologies into three sectors:

The media include **the press and publishing industry**, **the radio, television, music** and **film** **industries**, and **the Internet**. In a sense the media act as manufacturers of the content of information.

The service industry includes computer services, data processing, software, online data bases, computer communication services, and postal and telecommunication services (telephone, telegraph, telefax, etc.). This sector processes and disseminates the information.

The equipment industry manufactures the means of production or equipment for the other two sectors. This industry can be divided into manufacturers of data processing equipment and office, communication, electronic and non-electronic (e.g., cameras) products, navigation equipment, test instruments and computer hardware. Transport technology may be added to this list.

It is hard to say where the information revolution actually started. Some analysts trace it to the invention of printing, the development of writing or even the development of language. What is incontrovertible, however, is that over the past 150 years, and more particularly the past 50 years, this process has accelerated to a mind-boggling extent.

As a result it is virtually impossible today to imagine life without telephones, television and computers. In fact, international communication has become so much part of our lives that we take it for granted: a postcard from a friend who is holidaying abroad; a telephone call or e-mail message from a relative who has emigrated; a news broadcast about the conflict in Israel and the earthquake in India; television broadcasts of the Olympic Games in Australia; cheap flights advertised on the Internet; searching for information on the web; the latest films available on video; the European film festival at a local cinema; a CD of music by an American Hip Hop group; and so on and so forth. All these forms of international communication have become so common that they constitute a virtually invisible backdrop to our daily lives. Yet they are essential for information flow in the global village.

The term "globalisation" generally refers to a rapidly evolving process entailing the establishment of complex power and communication relations on a global basis between societies, cultures, institutions and individuals. A hallmark of this process is the transformation of temporal and spatial limitations, that is the shrinking of distance as a result of a dramatic reduction in disparities of distance --- whether personally or by way of messages, images or graphics. Hence globalisation implies that the world is in effect becoming "smaller" and that people are drawing "closer" to each other. Actual physical distances between people and places have not decreased, only the time it takes to overcome these obstacles.) This process has reached virtually every corner of the world. Time- and labour-saving production techniques (e.g., robot technology) and information and communication technologies to bridge temporal and spatial disparities (e.g., modern transport and telecommunication technologies) have helped to spread modern ideas, technologies and organisations from European and North American centres to the furthest corners of the earth (Mohammadi 1997:3, 128; Servaes, Lie & Terzis 2000:22; Tomlinson 1997:170; Waters 1995:3).

The compression of temporal and spatial disparities has also led to keener awareness of the world as a whole. Hence apart from the objective fact of globalisation there is also a subjective dimension which relates to people's greater awareness that they are part of a global scene (Robertson 1992:8).

As mentioned earlier in this Learning Unit, globalisation is a complex, composite process. In the first place one can distinguish between two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension entails a progressive compression of temporal and spatial disparities, culminating in the fact that the world is becoming one place, a single system. The vertical dimension comprises two processes. The first is a trend towards homogeneity, synchronisation, integration, unity and universalism. The other is a trend towards localisation, heterogeneity, differentiation, diversity and particularism. Although several analysts acknowledge the existence of these apparently contradictory processes, little is known about their interrelationship. Nonetheless it is widely accepted that they are intrinsically connected and, like the two sides of a coin, actually represent two manifestations of a single process (Servaes, Lie & Terzis 2000:58; Tehranian & Tehranian 1997:131).

For this reason Braman and Van Staden (2000:3) prefer to speak of "globalisations" in the plural, indicating that it is a multiple process which can be observed in various fields, is experienced differently in each field and manifests itself in diverse --- even contradictory --- ways. The nature of globalisation manifests itself in different domains.

The economic domain

Some people consider economic globalisation to be the driving force behind the entire globalisation process (Waters 1995:66). Others believe that economic globalisation would not have been possible without rapid developments in information and communication technologies. Either way, economic globalisation is an important and mammoth phenomenon. In this section we explore the history of economic globalisation, the driving forces behind it and two of its main facets. We also deal with the role of international organisations and trade blocs, the hazards and challenges associated with it, and criticism of economic globalisation theory.

**Definition and history of economic globalisation**

Economic globalisation may be defined as a process through which economic activities are increasingly conducted at an international level. Economic globalisation is characterised by an increasingly liberal approach to international trade in goods and services and international capital flow (Chen, Hule & Stocker, in Chen 1998:2). This implies reducing obstacles in the form of trade restrictions and, in some instances, lifting them altogether.

Economic globalisation is creating an integrated, transborder market for all commodities. This integration does not mean that there is just one global market but that national economies and markets are increasingly interdependent. No market or economy can function in complete isolation any more. Because of the rapid development of information and communication technologies, geographical boundaries and temporal disparities are no longer a factor in international trade and finance: a transborder or virtual market has come into being. Commodities are anything that can be exchanged, borrowed, bought or sold; they include money, physical products and services, and information. Hamelink (1994:110) describes economic globalisation as the emergence of global consumers who insist on global services and products supplied by global distributors.

* **Increase in international trade**

According to Waters (1995:66) trade is the foundation of globalisation, since it has the potential to link manufacturers and consumers who are geographically remote from each other. Human beings have traded since the dawn of time, but international trade burgeoned dramatically during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. Adelman (in Levy-Livermore 1998) identifies five phases in the expansion of international trade.

* **The Industrial Revolution: 1820--1913**

In the early 1800s the price of wood rose steeply and an alternative source of energy had to be found. The change to steam power triggered economic growth, revolutionary developments in long-distance transport and the transformation of local and global economic and social structures (Adelman, in Levy-Livermore 1998:3). The expansion of international trade is partly attributable to the development of air and sea transport, and especially the reduced cost of transport (Hamelink 1994:108). During this period Great Britain held military and economic sovereignty (Waters 1995:67).

* **The borderless economy**

The development of digital technologies and communication networks in the 1990s ushered in an era in which geography, borders and time no longer pose significant obstacles to international trade. Information has become the paramount commodity, and free, equal access to information has the potential to balance international relations.

* **Globalisation of financial markets**

In the present-day borderless economy capital flow is no longer restricted by geographical or temporal limitations. Increasingly money is circulating outside the jurisdiction of national governments (Hamelink 1994:108). One could call it a virtual financial market. Rastogi (1997:48) identifies three driving forces behind the globalisation of financial markets.

World-wide deregulation of trade and financial markets: Deregulation means that countries are abolishing various regulations that restrict the flow of both commodities and capital to and from other countries. In other words, countries are "opening up" their economies, making them more accessible.

Progress in information and communication technology: Transactions on financial markets are based on information flow. Modern information and communication technology facilitate information flow at tremendous velocities. Nowadays transactions on financial markets are completed literally in milliseconds. Information on financial markets is available world-wide 24 hours a day and when there are new developments it is updated instantly. CNN-FN (Financial News) is an international television channel and Bloomberg Financial Markets supplies financial information via computer networks, radio, television and print media (Howard 1998:48).

Diverse developments such as the establishment of free trade zones, the fall of communism and the switch to fluctuating exchange rates, the aging of the world population, the growth of a middle class in developing countries, and the revamping of pension schemes all contribute to a growing supply of, and demand for, capital.

There are still some obstacles which the transborder economy has to overcome, such as legislative, accounting and fiscal differences between countries. In addition not all countries are equally keen on deregulating their economies. Although these obstacles may delay the globalisation of financial markets, they cannot prevent it (Rastogi 1997:50, 53).

**Driving forces behind economic globalisation**

What gave rise to economic globalisation and continues to accelerate it? There are four major driving forces.

* **The economic theory of demand**

According to Hu and Griffith (1997:117) and McClements and Smallman (1998:5) the economic theory of demand is the foundation of globalisation. International trade (both goods and financial transactions) started increasing in response (supply) to a growing demand for goods, services, capital and information.

This raises a question: is the global demand for a specific product standardised (i.e., identical product attributes everywhere) or localised (ie a product has both unique and standard attributes in different countries or regions)? The debate on standardisation versus localisation continues. Some experts believe that manufacturers should concentrate on the similarities rather than the differences between consumer requirements in different countries or regions (standardisation). Others maintain that, because of cultural differences, consumer needs are not homogeneous around the world (localisation). A third group favours a contingency approach: in some parts of the world needs are homogeneous, in others they are heterogeneous. Manufacturers should adapt to the needs of specific consumers (Hu & Griffith 1997:117).

**ACTIVITY 4.15**

Consider the following questions: Does Coke taste the same everywhere? Is the McDonald's menu the same all over the world? Will you buy exactly the same Nike running shoes in the City of Tshwane, New York, Cairo, Tokyo, Polokwane and Bangkok? Think of more examples of standardisation versus localisation.

* **Economic integration**

The period since World War II is marked not just by liberalisation and globalisation of world trade but also by groupings of economic regions such as the EU, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (Hu & Griffith 1997:118). The role of international organisations and trade blocs will be dealt with later on.

Economic integration can assume various forms, ranging from limited to high levels of integration. The "mildest" form is the establishment of a free trade zone. This entails the abolition of trade tariffs and quotas between participant countries. NAFTA is an example of such a treaty.

A more advanced form of economic integration is a toll union. The principles of free trade zones apply to toll unions as well, but members are also expected to adopt a common trade policy in their dealings with the rest of the world.

A third form of economic integration is a common market, which takes the principles of a toll union further. In addition to members adopting a common trade policy, free movement of production factors like capital and labour is encouraged. In other words, a common market is created in which member countries exchange goods, services, labour and capital. The focus is on harmonising the various governments' policies on taxation and the industrial sector.

An economic and monetary union is the closest form of economic integration. Here economic policy is determined jointly, not just harmonised between member countries. In an economic and monetary union the possibility of a single currency and even the merging of political sovereignty are also considered. The EU is a good example. It already has a currency, the Euro, but it is still engaged in a process of further integration (Levy-Livermore 1998:253--5).

* **Technological development**

Technological development, especially in the field of communication, has promoted and accelerated economic globalisation. Advances in telecommunication and mass media mean that consumers around the world are exposed to new or different standards of living. This results in a global consumer market with similar needs (Hu & Griffith 1997:118). Technological progress has also made possible or facilitated the emergence of global financial markets.

* **Declining influence of the nation-state**

McClements and Smallman (1998:3) mention a fourth factor which is expediting economic globalisation, namely the declining influence of the nation-state. Waters (1995:67) observes that relations formed through international trade often whittle down or circumvent the influence of the nation-state. A company like Microsoft, for example, is so vast and influential that it can trade in a country without the local government having much control over it. This aspect of globalisation is discussed at greater length in section 1.2.4 (the political domain).

While most of the literature on globalisation focusses on the role of international trade, the global market and multinational corporations, Tehranian (1999:4) points out that it is actually the increase in international communication which has made globalisation possible. Without international communication and the technology that spreads it, there could have been no globalisation and global news would not flow between countries.

**International communication contributes to the processes of globalisation and global news flows in at least three ways:**

In the first place international communication provides the **technology infrastructure** (Tehranian 1999 calls it "infostructure") for the flow of information such as data, news and visual material which keeps the wheels of globalisation --- specifically those of the global economy --- rolling.

Secondly, the international advertising industry ensures a growing **demand for the commodities of globalisation**, which in its turn is largely responsible for the establishment of a global consumer culture.

Thirdly, international communication, and technology such as the Internet and social media, has given peripheral **individuals and groups a voice** and has empowered them in their struggle for self-determination and social justice; a struggle which often hinges on maintaining their own identity in the face of the commodities of globalisation.

**4.10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF LU**

We may conclude that current patterns of news flow in the world system do not help to provide a complete and accurate picture of present-day realities in all the corners of the world. This applies particularly to developing countries on the periphery, whose images are in danger of being distorted as a result of prevailing patterns of international news flow. Regional news agencies’ efforts to promote equal exchange between regions are hampered by diverse factors, such as limited technological infrastructure and inadequate training of journalists and technicians in developing countries. In addition, poor participation of some regions in the global exchange system prevents all parts of the world from taking their rightful place in international news coverage. It would seem, then, that the adverse effects of current patterns of news flow will continue in the foreseeable future. Hence, it is heartening to find news agencies like Inter Press Service which, despite financial problems, seeks to promote more balanced coverage of all parts of the world.

Together with the new developments in technology, participation in the international flow of news will hopefully become more democratic, in the sense that countries and people will have a chance to be heard – instead of being drowned out because their cause is not deemed important enough or news worthy enough.

Social media, mobile phones and the Internet have changed how news is produced and distributed by individuals and media corporations globally. Anyone, today, can be a news journalist and produce news and post them in online forums for all interested in it to read and look at its pictures or visuals. New media also provide interactive for a where audiences and persons debate world news stories among themselves and with media houses.

**Learning activities and self-assessment**

1. Take a copy of any newspaper. Identify all the international news items, that is, items about events beyond the borders of South Africa (or your country of residence). Which parts of the world are covered in these items? Categorise the news items according to the classification of world system theory (centre, periphery, semi-periphery). What inferences can you make from the international news coverage in South Africa (or your country of residence)?
2. Take any newspaper published in South Africa (or your country of residence). Identify all reports of international news events. Try to identify the source (global news agency, local agency, regional agency or other) of each item. Classify the items in three categories: (1) neighbouring countries of South Africa (or your country of residence; (2) other countries in Africa (or on the continent where you live); and (3) other parts of the world. Complete a table using the following headings:

Item Category (1–3 above) Source

Write down your inferences from the table in regard to:

(1) the role of news agencies in your local context, and

(2) the flow of international news in that context.

1. Watch the television news broadcasts of the SABC or an international news station like CNN, SABC or BBC World. Identify the news coverage of some conflict situation in the world (i.e., beyond the borders of South Africa or your country of residence). Try to write down who the warring parties are, what the conflict is about, the various parties’ views on the contested issue(s) and the background to, or context of, the dispute(s). What inferences are you able to make?
2. Imagine that you are a senior employee at an international news station like CNN. Write a letter to top management in which you make recommendations for improving news coverage of Africa. Use the material in this chapter to substantiate your proposals.
3. How can the traditional news agencies such as Reuters, AFP and AP, as well as other sources of news, such as newspapers, radio and television, hope to compete or even utilise social networks such as Twitter and Facebook for their own benefit?

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