**Explain the content of international communication.**

International communication is a complex and fast-growing sub-field within the major field of communication and media studies. It encompasses the issue of culture and cultural commodification, (the turning of cultural products into commodities), the diffusion of information and news broadcasting by empires around the world, and the challenges faced by the developing world in the light of these processes. Mohammad (2005).

**Content of international communication**

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.

**Conclusion**

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.