

CHAPTER TWO

2 INFORMATION FLOWS IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

This chapter reviews previous empirical and theoretical studies on global news flows.¹ It frames the discussion within a critical political economy theoretical perspective, adapted from Golding and Murdock (2000). Their approach is an integrated approach, producing a synthesis of various strands of theory. Integrated perspectives are a relatively recent trend in critical studies of the mass media, media organisations, and media in society. The chapter is therefore organised around several related theorists who have integrated a political economy perspective with cultural studies, and with other strands of theory, to produce this kind of synthesis. The theorists reviewed in this chapter, and the perspective adopted, is neo-Marxist² (Golding & Murdock, 2000; Schudson, 2000).

2.1 Contextualising and conceptualising globalisation and information flows

2.1.1 Sceptics, globalist, and transformationalist definitions of globalisation

Globalisation provides the contextual background for this study. The concept of globalisation proves to be highly contentious, both to define and to operationalise. This is partly because the concept evolves with social evolution and as the world changes. This means that various ‘stages of globalisation’ are identifiable, as ‘early,’ ‘intermediary,’ and ‘late’ globalisation (cf. Held & McGrew, 2003, pp. 1-8, own terminology). This study adopts the so-called intermediary stage of globalisation, which is the period “following the collapse of state socialism and the consolidation of capitalism worldwide,” as Held and McGrew (2003, p. 1) put it. In other words, ‘intermediary globalisation’ is a transitional stage of post-Cold War development. For

¹ The area of study on global news flows is broad and eclectic and dispersed across various disciplines. See Mowlana (1997, 1996).

² Neo-Marxism goes beyond Marxist explanations of power relations, to introduce issues relevant to neo-imperialist and dependency and systems theorists, for example, monopolisation, commoditisation, the rise of transnational media conglomerates and core-periphery or ‘North-South’ debates. Neo-Marxism also incorporates post-structural discourse (e.g. on identity and hierarchical formations). See Janoski, et. al (2005).

globalists, this transitory stage through which globalisation passes is significant to re-orientating the world, and processes and structures (cf. Giddens, 2003).

At the end of the Cold War, and as the 1990s approached the new millennium, new conditions for global social relations came to the foreground. These conditions presented qualitatively different socio-economic and political circumstances (than past historical epochs) and framed the world in an advanced development stage of “neo-liberal capitalism.” Neo-liberalism and liberalism are related philosophical positions that seek to promote a free enterprise, capitalist developmental path to overcome such social problems as underdevelopment in the Third World.

McMurtry (2002) refers to “competing value frameworks” in the attempt to understand globalisation and in relation to global capitalism, while others describe the contentious framing of these debates as indicative of paradigm shifts (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997). As early as the 1980s, Amin et al. (1982), discussed the “dynamics of a global crisis” framed within the logic of a capitalist world system, and they theorised this “crisis” as a “transition” (pp. 7-11). Other theorists describe globalisation as a multi-dimensional process that relates to the dependency of societies on information-driven networks (Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998; Webster, 2004). From these various theoretical points of view, one encounters terms such as “the network society,”³ the “information revolution,”⁴ a “global village,”⁵ and the “information super-highway.”⁶ Information flows are of central importance and related to ‘globalisation’ (cf. Rantanen, 2005).

Information flows and news, in particular, are implicated in these theoretical debates about the current world order such that news and information flows, and the organisations involved in news flows, must be understood in relation to the concept

³ Manuel Castells 1996, 1997, 2002, also see Frank Webster 2004

⁴ Mark Poster 1996, Kumar 2004

⁵ Marshall McLuhan 1989, 1962

⁶ Frank Webster 2004, Held and McGrew 2000, Kumar 2004

of globalisation (cf. Boyd-Barrett, 2000; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Rantanen, 2005; Webster, 2004). News agencies are identified as important media organisations involved in the trans-border exchanges of news (as an economic and a cultural product) and in information flows and therefore contribute to globalisation. Information flows is a term describing the opening up and fluidity of communication and information across borders. News is defined as a socially constructed discourse about world events (cf. Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998).

Drawing on Held and McGrew (2000), Hoogvelt (2001, pp. 120-121) identifies three broad categories of theorists who define and describe globalisation. They each focus on an aspect of the social, political, or economic conditions relevant to the concept. These theorists are identified as sceptics, hyperglobalists (or globalists), and transformationalists. The sceptics focus mainly on the economic aspect and the international integration of national markets in order to dismiss the idea of “globalisation.” They reject that globalisation is a “new” or a “now” phenomenon. Sceptics in fact, prefer the term “internationalisation” to the term “globalisation” to describe the interrelations among nations (cf. Held & McGrew, 2003, pp. 14-15). According to Hoogvelt (2001), the sceptics’ position is summarised as follows:

...globalisation, when understood as a worldwide process of integration of *national economies*, simply does not stand up to the historical record of the late colonial period, the period the period of the ‘gold standard’, when (...) the world was just as (or perhaps even more) integrated and open than it is today, and when certainly the ‘developing world as a whole’ was more deeply embedded in the world system (*italics in original text*). (p. 120)

Hirst and Thompson (2003), for example, are theorists in this camp who do not accept that the world integration of nations’ economies, described as globalisation, offers anything new or “now.” They prefer ‘literal’ and ‘tangible’ evidences on which to base globalisation as a phenomenon.

In almost direct contrast to the sceptics, the hyperglobalist theorists, according to Hoogvelt (2001), define globalisation by looking at political and power issues. They,

for instance, see the excesses of power by private businesses (particularly international business and transnational networks of trade and finance) as overtaking the power of the nation-state, rendering the latter “irrelevant.” They offer a “declinist [sic] view of the state” (p. 120). As such, nation-states have lost power over and their control of domestic economies, and instead have become mere conduits between global economic and local (domestic) relations (Hoogvelt, 2001, p. 120).

According to Hoogvelt (2001, p. 121), the transformationalist position looks at globalisation primarily as a social phenomenon. Transformationalists focus on, for instance, the cross-border exchange of goods and services and the relations between nations. They talk about issues such as “time-space compression, brought about the fusion of telecommunications and information technology,” about the use of technologies in instantaneous communication, relations of exchange, and facilitating the speed of business transactions (p. 121). Hoogvelt does however, state that transformationalists are critical of the disparities of access to these “changes” where “in this global, real time, economy, ever more people, segments, areas, and regions of the world economy are systematically becoming excluded from it” (p. 121). Transformationalists, such as Giddens (1990) and Castells (1996) provide a sort of ‘middle ground’ between the sceptics—who emphasise “the facts of economic globalisation” (Hoogvelt, 2001, p. 121)—and hyperglobalists who see a fundamental shift in world power and political relations mainly away from the control of the nation-state (cf. Rantanen, 2005, p. 5). Transformationalists accept globalisation as “a central driving force behind the rapid social, political, and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and ‘world order’” (Rantanen, 2005, p. 5), but they do not deny the importance and relevance of the nation-state.

In the emerging 21st century, globalisation is described at the “cultural level” as the compression of the world and the subsequent intensification of “global consciousness” (Hoogvelt, 2001, pp. 122-123). With regard to “global news flows,” “compression” refers to the wider accessibility of information across the globe, which

brings people together in virtual space through the intervention of modern technologies. This in turn creates a “global consciousness” (Hoogvelt 2001, p. 122) where many describe the world as growing smaller or as a “global village” (McLuhan, 1989, 1962; cf. Thussu, 1998).

The global exchange of information and news flows facilitates the compression of the world and, in so doing, stimulates the development of global consciousness. Global consciousness is the ‘basis’ for the emerging global public sphere (see chapter 1, section 1.3.1.). For example, various global social movements,⁷ such as environmentalist groups, women’s groups, and other social lobbyist groups, rely on the global exchange of information to address their concerns and to stimulate support everywhere for their causes. As stated by Held and McGrew (2003), “...the constellation of actors, agencies and institutions—from regional political organisations to the UN—which are oriented towards international and transnational issues is cited as further evidence of a growing political awareness. Finally, a commitment to human rights as indispensable to the dignity and integrity of all peoples...is held to be additional support of an emerging ‘global consciousness’” (p. 18). The compression in global relations is seen also in the cooperation of governments in information exchanges about issues such as international human rights. On the African continent, the formation of the African Union (AU) as an integration of African nation-states is seen to address concerns on that continent as does the European Union (EU) address issues of partnered EU states.

A further characteristic and description of globalisation is in the ordering of time and space and the simultaneous fragmentation and homogenisation of the world (Giddens, 2000; Pillay, 2003; Sreberny, 2000; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997). In media

⁷ Bilton et al. (2002, p. 548) define a social movement as “a broad alliance of people with common interests or goals acting collectively to promote or prevent some form of social change.” In relation to this definition, Held & McGrew (2003, p.487) describe “new regional and global transnational actors [that] have emerged [in the past few decades], contesting the terms of globalisation New social movements such as the environmental movement. . . are the ‘new’ voices of an emergent transnational public domain. . . .”

terms, homogenisation is especially evident in the use of broadcast and satellite communication networks to create the virtual space in which new, but often temporary, social relationships are forged among diverse peoples in the world. The instantaneous broadcasting of a sporting event across the globe creates a ‘global public space’ in which diverse and varied audiences come together in virtual reality, but in “real time”, to witness the event that is mediated through broadcast and satellite technologies. People supporting the same teams are thus (temporarily) united in this virtual space despite their differences in real time. These conditions present the world in a qualitatively different light from any previous interconnectivity that existed at other periods in history. It is a “new” and now phenomenon.

With globalisation, the global and the local co-exist separately, and at other times, they blend. Benedict Anderson (1983) cites the newspaper as a media tool used in uniting “imagined communities” and in the consolidation of a national identity.⁸ A local newspaper reporting on events from different parts of the globe (i.e., foreign news) creates a space in which people from different backgrounds and geographic locations share in the experience and inhabit the same space as the space in which the event has occurred. At the national level, newspapers produce information on a daily basis that is said to unite a diverse readership of people in different localities in a country and thus enables ‘nationhood.’ Therefore, an element of the phenomenon of globalisation is media technology. In Anderson’s (1983) example, the newspaper is an apparatus or an ideological tool for consolidating the national identity through its social use as well as in its content. Newspapers, like other media, impact upon the ideas, opinions, and beliefs of people. The act of reading the newspaper has in itself become a social ritual shared across the globe. Anderson explains how it is possible for information to shape national identity because the news that people read in

⁸ By ‘imagined communities’ Anderson (1983) is referring to the social construction of national identity.

newspapers is fundamentally about their society, and this offers diverse people a shared lived experience.⁹

“Real time” is an associated aspect in the creation of ‘imagined spaces’ and, because of the immediacy of information flows due to modern technologies, these social spaces are first fragmented (e.g., in an event being extracted from its natural setting) and then homogenised or consolidated (e.g., in a news report). The example of a globally televised news-making event exhibits this phenomenon of fragmenting and then homogenizing in real time. The symbolic creation of space “inhabited by groups of diverse peoples” is a further example of the power of the media in relation to the phenomenon of globalisation. According to Rantanen (2005), in today’s world, one cannot speak about globalisation without referring to the modern mass media and vice versa (p. 1).

Globalisation is apparent too in economic processes and relations. The global market economy is dependent on information to facilitate transactions. We speak about a ‘global class of elite people’ who are from distinctly different cultural and political backgrounds but who share a common class identity and now, aware of this, behave to globally preserve their class interests. In economic terms, globalisation, in relation to the exchange and free flow of information and transactional relations across space and time, is facilitated by advanced technology (e.g., a business transaction, such as purchasing currency, that is completed “online”). Economic activity is stretched across the globe in a qualitatively different manner than any previous economic transactions. The quicker information is received, the quicker transactions are completed. Globalisation may be described in this “instantaneous” interaction and exchange of information (Hoogvelt, 2001).

⁹ The reports of xenophobic attacks in the news in May 2008 in South Africa, and around the world stirred the reactions of people. In South Africa, the government was forced to respond and within civil society itself, South African NGOs facilitated various forms of assistance to foreign nationals displaced by the attacks in South Africa.

Speed, therefore, becomes a valued asset in social relationships and, for example, in the operations, especially at news agencies. The speed to acquire information and distribute it with immediacy is paramount to news agencies. Hoogvelt (2001) states: “Time . . . defines the value of money. The time of production together with the time of circulation of exchange are referred to as the *turnover time of capital*. The greater the speed with which capital that is launched into circulation can be recuperated, the greater the profit will be” (italics in original text) (p. 124). It is no wonder that globalisation (i.e., integration, compression, “time/space distantiation”) is facilitating the system of capitalism (cf. Hoogvelt, 2001, pp.124-5). In other words, in business transactions, profit making is facilitated far quicker under these conditions (that also describe globalisation). This quotation above parallels the role of information circulated through news organisations, as well. For example, the more ‘positive’ information investors have about a certain social context, the more likely they are to invest in these contexts. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p. 1) have adequately described global news agencies as “agents of globalisation” and conduits in the process of global capitalism. News flows and news agencies are ‘structured’ into world conditions in such a way as to support, even unwittingly, systems of exploitation.

2.1.2 The influence of globalisation and market capitalism in the flow of news and on news agencies

The end of the Cold War, the ensuing consolidation of a neo-liberal (post-Keynesian¹⁰) global market economy, socio-economic integration and political participation of nations, and the apparent decline of the nation-state within its geo-territory suggest a new phase of globalisation (or, an ‘intermediary stage’). These events also have influenced global information flows. Therefore, the relationships among news agencies become important in addressing news flows. Change in global

¹⁰ Keynesianism, named after economist John Maynard Keynes, is an economic principle proposing state regulation in economic process and relations and national self-sufficiency.

society is said to be influencing news agency operations and structure (and inevitably news content, described in the review of content-based studies below).

The global market, as Hardt and Negri (2000) argue, has from the late 1980s, become the global centre or the “new Empire” in which networks of economic, social, cultural, and political relations are interconnected. Unlike the situation in previous centuries, no one nation or alliance is the central axis of global economic and political power. Instead, all nations are now involved in a struggle to remain “connected” to this “Empire” of global capitalism. The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s saw a scramble among nations for global political and economic cooperative relations. Some describe this new era as a turning point in history (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Gudykunst & Mody, 2002; Vincent & Nordenstreng, 1999).

This study considers news and information flows to be central to informing local ‘public spheres’ globally. However, information flows also preserve the socio-economic system of capitalism. This system relies on the free flow of information as explained above, in business transactions, for instance, but capitalism has an uneven impact on the development of nations (Golding & Harris, 1997; Hamelink, 1994; Held & McGrew, 2000). Therefore, a free flow of information inadvertently supports the inequalities of this system. Some theorists argue that information free flow is itself an uneven process in relation to capitalism (Nordenstreng & Griffin, 1999; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997; Vincent et al., 1999). Not all nations participate in or have access to information flows. These latter statements present a paradox and are clarified in the next section.

Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p. 1, p. 15) state that news lies at the heart of modern capitalism and that news agencies therefore facilitate the global capitalist system, based on their operations of news production and distribution. Under global market capitalism, news is transformed into a commodity; it is “commercialised” (Bennett, 2003, pp. 10, 84-5, 90), and it furthermore enables the process of

globalisation (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, pp. 1-2). As a commodity, news is directly or indirectly relevant to the process of market-driven production (of supply and demand) and to economic activities around the world. News is information that drives the flow of capital within and between nations (cf. Bennett, 2003; Curran, 2000; Curran & Gurevitch). News agencies, which are sources and producers¹¹ of news, therefore have a significant influence on global flows, news content, selection, and the quality and quantity of news flowing between and within nations.

News—such as stock market prices, indexes and trends, and national events—facilitates socio-economic processes of exchange and trade relations; political processes, such as international relations and partnerships; global governance and cooperation; and cultural processes, such as the exchange of cultural products (e.g., music and fashion). News is itself a cultural, economic, and political construction of the modern mass media,¹² and, under this system, it is increasingly serving the needs of a commercialised and information-driven world on the one hand and the interests of nationalist governments on the other hand (Curran & Leys, 2000; Curran, 2000b; Leys, 1999). As Leys (1999) states “The media of communication have been far more deeply subordinated to market forces than ever before, and what is communicated through them has been subjected to an altogether new degree of commodification,” (p. 315). Commercialisation and government monopolisation of information flow result in, to use Leys’ words, the “closing down [of] the public sphere” (p. 316).

The compression of the world and the experience of global interdependencies among nations include the creation of a global socio-economic, political, and cultural (i.e., an

¹¹ The recent spate of news articles on the post-election violence in Zimbabwe and the debacle of the undemocratic run-off elections in Zimbabwe in July 2008 saw reactions from the international community and their calling for disinvestment and sanctions to be levelled against the Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe.

¹² The term ‘mass media’ is used here to refer broadly to the print media (especially newspapers), electronic or broadcast media (such as, television and radio) and to the more recent category of digital media, for example the Internet. The term ‘media’ is also used as shorthand to refer to the role of journalists and of news agencies that are specifically engaged in the activity of information generation and news production.

information) sphere. An illustration of this is offered by Hoogvelt (2001, pp. 122-123) as the extent to which the lives of people in different parts of the globe and the conditions that impact on their lives are experienced almost as a domino-effect in other parts of the globe. More currently, “the economic recession in American society” [sparked among other things by the US war in Iraq since 2002]¹³ “is having a related impact on the gross domestic product (GDP) and inflation rates across all parts of the world including in South Africa” (Trevor Manuel Budget Speech, 2008).

Global news agencies are structured as commercially viable organisations and, even though they are non-profit, are driven by a profit principle that they feed back into their operations. By agreeing to the terms of news exchange with global news agencies, national news agencies inadvertently support this commercial system, and so a vicious cycle continues in the relationships of these news organisations, in much the same way that global production (and consumption) under market capitalism expands and regenerates (cf. Peet, 2003; Sweezy, 1997; Zeleza, 2003). If this cycle continues, it reaches crisis proportions, as we are witnessing in this decade in the 21st century, a global financial and economic crisis of capital – of over-production and under-consumption – and the inability to further expand and regenerate.

With the news industry, however, it is not simply a case of the over-production of news, but also a qualitative change in the nature of news meant to ‘serve’ (and preserve) the public sphere. Capitalism is a rationalised process and activity devoid of, in terms of its economic principle, social norms, and values (Peet; Zeleza). For instance, it drives consumers to acquire certain goods in far more abundance than is needed. The “good life” (and success) is associated with a material life and the accumulation of wealth, but loses ground in aspects of immaterial value. Similarly, Leys (1999) states

¹³ Amin et al (1982) already in the 1980s have described these conditions (that would emerge) as akin to global crisis of the capitalist world system.

By the beginning of the 20th century, however, the public sphere (...) had been seriously eroded in the course of the 19th century. (...) It had become the target of heavy manipulation and commercial advertising and had ceased to be a forum for objective and critical debate. And in the present century, (...) – the creeping re-absorption of civil society by the state through bureaucratisation, commodification, and the colonisation of the lifeworld had all but destroyed the public sphere. (p. 314)

To compound matters in relation to news flows, in a globalised world, information is not readily accessible to all social groups in a society. This is particularly evident in developing social contexts where disparities between the rich and poor are the highest in the world, high levels of illiteracy continue, and despite independence, these disparities influence the ability of most people in these societies to gain access to or to participate in information flows. Unequal conditions further breed undemocratic systems and vice versa. The result is the exclusion of large groups of people from benefiting and participating in their societies. Access to information can simply mean having one's voice heard. If globalisation represents the world becoming smaller, then these disparities should become all the more visible and pronounced. This point pre-empted the discussion on global imbalances in news flows, taken up in the next section.

2.2. Studies on news agencies and “global imbalances” in news flows

News agencies around the world are said to be organisations located at the heart of social, political, and cultural communication because their main *raison d'être* is news and information production and distribution on a daily basis (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, p.19; cf. Schudson, 2000).¹⁴ Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p.1)¹⁵ state, “news agencies are of considerable significance [when one considers them to be] among the first of the world's transnational or multi-national, [or] indeed, global media organisations.” They are important in having established and in maintaining global and local relations of news production, distribution, and exchange (cf. Gudykunst & Mody, 2002; Mohammadi, 1997; Mowlana, 1996, 1997). The

¹⁴ Also, see Bennett (2003), Gudykunst and Mody (2002), Sreberny and Stevenson (1999), Kumar 2004.

¹⁵ Also, see Herman and McChesney (1997), McChesney (1997), McChesney, et al (1998), Thussu (1998). They discuss the nature of transnational and multinational media institutions.

traditional role of news agencies has been to collect and distribute news copy among its member newspapers. These early news agencies were cooperatives, and Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p. 6, p. 19) describe them as “wholesalers” of news.

The first news agencies¹⁶ are recognised as media organisations that arose in the 1800s alongside the industrialisation process in Europe (Read, 1999; cf. Sinclair et al., 1996, pp. 170-187). This socio-economic and political industrial phase is identified as ‘early capitalism’ (Hoogvelt, 2001), and it would give way to a new market-based, global economy from the late 19th century. Traditionally, Reuters, Agence France-Presse (AFP), Associated Press (AP), and United Press International (UPI) were considered the “big four”¹⁷ global news agencies. Their technological capabilities and their ability to access, process, and distribute information across wide geographical regions gave them their global status. They also far exceeded and still exceed the national and regional news agencies’ client subscription base and distribution networks. “National” and “continental” news agencies are labelled in these categories or on these ‘levels’ because of their limited outreach and news outputs in comparison to the global news agencies (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, pp. 8-13; Boyd-Barrett, 2000; cf. Boyd-Barrett, 1980).

Boyd-Barrett (1998, pp. 4-5, p. 9) and Rantanen (2000, pp. 87-89) report changes that have led to the demise of the UPI altogether and to the increasing visibility of European nationally based news agencies, which are regional in character but which have begun to extend globally since the 1990s. They report that the German agency,

¹⁶ Includes Reuters (British), Havas (now Agence France-Presse, AFP, French) and the German Wolff, which is obsolete since WWII, and succeeded by the Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA). The Associated Press (AP) and the now defunct United Press International (UPI) emerged in 1848 and in 1958 respectively, in North America (Harris 1981). These have all since evolved and transformed, and taken on different structures from their predecessors. See Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998, Boyd-Barrett 2000, Read 1999.

¹⁷ Reuters, AFP, AP and DPA maintain the status of ‘big four’ in global news flows. Before UPI was dissolved and subsumed under AP operations, it fitted this categorisation as well. See Boyd-Barrett (1980) and Boyd-Barrett & Thussu (1992).

Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), the Spanish Agencia EFE,¹⁸ and the Italian Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (ANSA) are all contenders as global news distributors (see also Rantanen, 2004). In fact, since the mid-1990s, DPA and EFE have taken on a global character of news distribution and production, with a network of bureaus competing with the likes of AP and AFP. EFE, however, is still largely geared to the Spanish and Latin American markets of news clients. Together, AP, Reuters, AFP, and DPA are the biggest distributors and wholesalers of foreign news to global media clients and news markets (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998). Reuters, AP and AFP, however, have longer histories as transnational operations than all the other, including the national and continental, news agencies, which began to appear only in the 20th century¹⁹ (Boyd-Barrett, 1980). Like other business operations, news agencies, particularly those of global scope, are facing a ‘crisis’ as explained below.

2.2.1 An ‘international relations’ perspective²⁰

In previous studies on news agencies, the relationships amongst them have been described in a hierarchical and power relationship, thereby grouping different levels of agencies based on their operations, outreach, and news clients and markets (Boyd-Barrett, 1980; Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992; Harris, 1981; International Press Institute (IPI), 1972). In these studies, news agencies are categorised according to their level of importance given their influence in the flow of news in production and distribution processes and their economic and technological capabilities and control over news flows (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992).

¹⁸ According to Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p. 118), the origin of the name, EFE, “is not clear. Some Historians say that the F stands for the initials of two small Spanish agencies, Febus and Faro. Others attribute the F to the political organisation of Falange, main supporter of Franco during [the] years of his government.”

¹⁹ The exception to this being DPA, the German news agency, which was consolidated after the Second World War, post-1945, see Jürgen Wilke 1998.

²⁰ Giddens (2003, p.61) distinguishes between two theoretical perspectives, or “bodies of literature” that discuss globalisation. The one is an “international relations” perspective, the other is the “world system theory” associated with Immanuel Wallerstein. “Theorists of international relations characteristically focus upon the development of the nation-state system, with its origins in Europe and its subsequent worldwide spread.” Wallerstein’s world system theory “embrace[s] [a] conception of globalised relationships”. It is concerned with such phenomena as “world economies—networks of economic connections of a geographically extensive sort...” (pp. 62-3).

The following figure illustrates this hierarchical arrangement as “bi-directional” but unequal, with the directional flow of news predominantly from the global to the national news agencies, or top-down. The continental or regional news agencies did not play as prominent a role in the directional flow of news as national and global agencies. Continental news agencies supply news to their continents or regions, but, in most relationships of news exchange, they rely on the participation of their member national news agencies to collate and exchange their news and then redistribute this news continent-wide or regionally to subscribers.

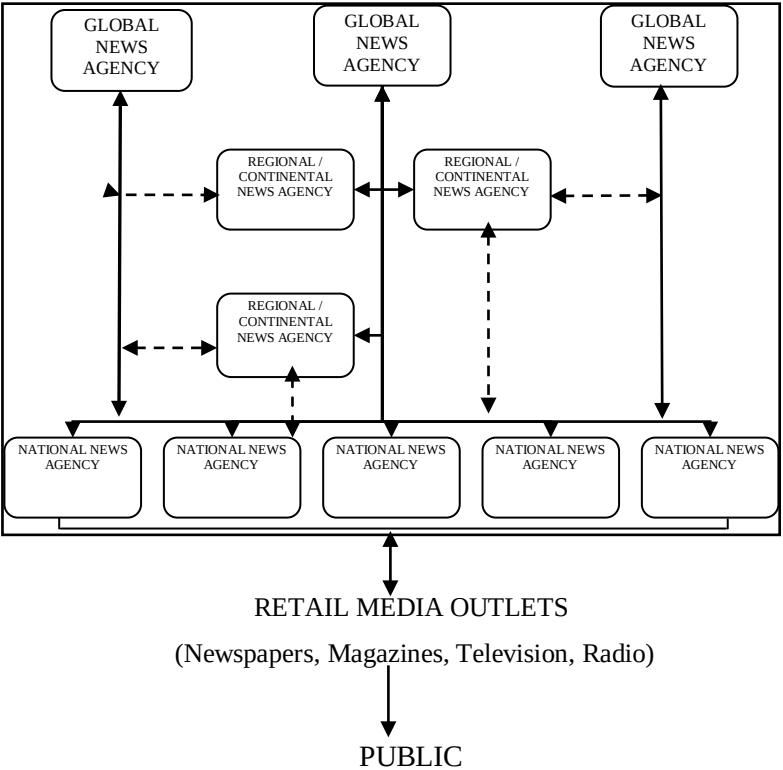


Figure 2-1 A hierarchical arrangement of news agencies around the world

In Figure 2-1, the directional flows of news represented by the solid arrowhead lines in the diagram, news flowing predominantly between the global and national news agencies is what finally reaches the national retail media, which then supply their publics (cf. Mowlana, 1997).

Boyd-Barrett and Thussu (1992) and Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998) have described this arrangement as the global news agencies enjoying a monopoly over news flows and in their exchange relationships with national and to some regional news agencies because they ultimately determine the global news schedule or what nations around the world will receive as global news. Global news agencies, however, do not exchange news among themselves. In this representational flow (Figure 2-1), there has never been direct contact between the public and the news agencies.²¹ More recently, in the late 1990s, this situation began to change through the intervention of new media technologies, especially the Internet (Rantanen, 2004).

The early news agencies from the 18th century began as a mixture of private (family or estate) ownerships and cooperative ventures of the print media (i.e., newspapers) (Boyd-Barrett, 1980; Harris, 1981; cf. Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998). They focused on providing daily coverage of significant events mainly to newspapers, their main clients. Newspaper owners were some of the original owners of news agencies, but ownership also later extended to including shareholders in the form of other media formats such as broadcast media (i.e., television and radio). Changes in ownership at news agencies occurred especially as “new media” forms emerged because of significant technological advancements. In the 1920s, broadcast-radio technology overtook print media, and then in the 1970s, it was television broadcasting (see also Boyd-Barrett, 2000; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 2000; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; cf. McLuhan, 1989). The newspaper weathered these changes, however, as it remained the main media format for information and hard news dissemination (as opposed to the predominantly entertainment formats of radio and television). Technological changes are therefore one factor explaining external change and influence on news agencies (Boyd-Barrett, 2000; Webster, 2004).

²¹ In studies dating from the 1980s to the 1990s on news agencies including Boyd-Barrett (1980), Harris (1981), Sreberny-Mohammadi et al (1985), Boyd-Barrett and Thussu (1992), Mowlana (1996, 1997).

Boyd-Barrett (2000) states that news agencies have undergone significant and important changes in the last two decades, that they incorporate several new dimensions and that they have lost influence in other areas. He focuses on the most significant change being change in the ownership of agencies. The once traditional news agencies now include various forms of state, private, cooperative, and corporate ownership patterns (Boyd-Barrett, 2000; cf. Curran, 2000b). Ownership at news agencies has a significant influence on their role in news production and selection and in the exchange and subscription of their services.

In investigating the relationships of news exchange among news agencies, the related processes of news selection, production, and distribution come to the foreground. The process of news exchange among news agencies is based on contractual agreements and is identified, amongst other things, as central in defining the relationships between them. These relationships also influence global information flows.

The selection process refers to the procedures that news agencies as information gatherers use to decide which events are important and newsworthy. Production refers to the technical and procedural process by which events (in the social world) are transformed into news, but it also denotes the economic elements and cultural elements involved at news agencies in transforming an event into news. Some authors describe the transformation of a cultural product into an economic commodity as “cultural-capital” (see also Schudson, 2000, Thussu 1998).

Distribution of news refers to the exchange agreements entered into between respective news agencies, and it simultaneously describes the “flow” (or movement) of information and the qualitative dynamics of this flow. For example, the use of the term “free flow of information” denotes a form of distribution that is unrestricted by state regulation (Oosthuizen, 1989). In several studies (see below), it is argued that global news exchange, in spite of “free flow,” is not symmetrical. In fact, this emphasis on “freedom” of flows mainly benefited Western news producers.

Furthermore, in addressing the content of news in global flows, it was found to be highly unequal or imbalanced, according to these studies.

De Beer and Steyn (1996, 1997) and other media studies (Sreberny & Stevenson, 1999) found that news content and the selection practices in Western media, in general, tend to focus overwhelmingly on issues of devastation, violence, political coups, crime, poverty, and corruption when reporting on developing societies. This “imaging” presents these countries as underdeveloped, corrupt places in constant turmoil. This “bad news” focus in selection practices is seen to perpetuate or condone stereotypical images and identity-creation in the developed world nations about the developing world nations. In comparison, news contents often portray a “positive image” or positive news about the developed nations. According to the authors, this asymmetry in information therefore encourages even further the existing schisms in economics and politics between developed and developing world nations (cf. Escobar, 1995). In the final instance, therefore, news can become a tool in the construction of national identities (Anderson, 1983; Escobar).

This study questions the continued validity of such a hierarchical arrangement of news agencies in light of significant changes in the global news environment, including socio-economic, technological, and political change and internal structural and operational changes at agencies. The study asks whether given these so-called internal and external pressures, there is a need to redefine and reconceptualise global flows, and it focuses this analysis on the relationships of news exchange among news agencies. It therefore proposes reconceptualising this hierarchical, top-down flow.

2.2.2 World system theory and “glo-cal” news exchanges

In describing globalisation and global-local relationships, theorists like Amin (1997, pp. 55-56) argue that the successive “movement of capital accumulation” has become increasingly internationalised. However, rather than being conducive to growth in

“the periphery” (as it is in the centres/ core),²² it is further polarizing and alienating peripheral nations and ensuring growth in the “constituted centres of the world system” (see Chang, 1998). Hoogvelt (2001) relates the concepts, “core,” and “periphery” to the historical expansion of capitalism and an international division of labour or, “a capitalist world economy” (pp. 14-15). The concepts, “core” and “periphery”, are associated with the world system theory, which focuses on the emergence of the capital world-system (see Giddens, 2003, pp. 61-2).

Other theorists have developed theoretical models based on empirical data suggesting an asymmetrical, core-peripheral relationship in the flow of information in the world system (Chang, 1998; Chang et al., 2000; Curran, 1996; Mohammadi, 1997). Figure 2-2 below is a simplified representation of these core-peripheral relationships in the literature on information flows in the world system. It resembles the kinds of uneven power relationships presented in Figure 2-1 of the “top-down” flows of and exchanges in information, but it differs in an important respect. While Figure 2-1 presented the flow of news within a hierarchical, uni-linear or uni-directional movement, Figure 2-2 differs to the extent that information now becomes concentrated within regional or ‘core’ states, while peripheral states are largely excluded from control over and inclusion in information. Some studies, for instance, found that imbalances in information pertained to the over-representation of richer, ‘core’ nations in news, and the under-representation of poorer, ‘peripheral’ nations (Chang et al., 2000; Chang, 1998; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985, Sreberny & Stevenson, 1997).

²² The concepts, “core” and “periphery”, arising from the world system theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, indicate the world as “geographical areas and states”, according to Chang (1998, p. 532).

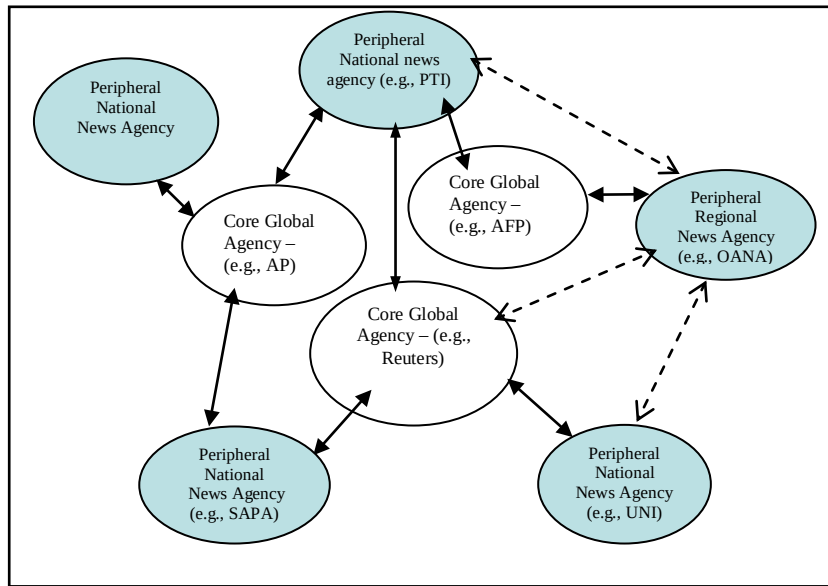


Figure 2-2 Centre-periphery global news flows and relationships amongst news agencies

Key: PTI: Press Trust of India, UNI: United News of India, OANA: Organisation of Asia Pacific News Agencies, SAPA: South African Press Association, AFP: Agence France-Presse, AP: Associated Press, Reuters: Reuters Agency

The solid double-headed lines indicate a form of bi-directional, but uneven or imbalanced, exchange of news between the “core”/global agencies and non-core/peripheral (national or continental/regional) news agencies. The broken-arrow lines joining the “peripheral-regional” agencies with the “peripheral-national” agencies indicate that some form of exchange agreement exists between national and regional agencies, particularly around the time of the independence of Third World nations and the associated development of their national news agencies (see below). An example of such a relationship is the setting up of the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool (NANAP) during the Cold War (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992). The Organisation of Asia Pacific News agencies (OANA) and PANA are two other examples of this “South-South cooperation” amongst national news agencies across different geo-territories (cf. Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992; see also Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998).

Regional news agencies could also (indirectly) receive news of global news agencies via their collaborating member national news agencies. Hence, the broken-arrow line

from, for example, the Reuters agency to OANA indicates the possibility that OANA receives Reuters' news from its member national agencies. This practice has, however, been prevented in the contracts of exchange between global news agencies and national news agencies. That is, the news cannot be redistributed via the national news agencies without giving credit to the original source (or agency). Hence, in newspapers, one can often see, for example, SAPA-AP or SAPA-AFP in the credit line, meaning that SAPA has carried that particular news story from off the wires of AP and AFP.

Informal agreements existed amongst the first global news agencies that dated back to the late 18th century, according to Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998). These informal agreements amongst the core global agencies maintained certain regions of the world exclusively under their coverage for the supply of news and the distribution of news from these regions. In another sense, this oligopoly oligarchic arrangement led to the independent collaboration amongst Third World nations' national news agencies to set up their own inter-regional news agencies such as OANA, PANA, and the Caribbean News Agency (CANA).

Another similar example of the kind of informal "core-core" agreements amongst global news agencies regarding information flow patterns is given in the account by Wilke (1998) of the partitioning of post-Second World War German communications infrastructure amongst the allied nations (i.e., France, the USA, Britain, and in East Germany, Russia). In later years, following World War II, core political and economic power blocs emerged, and Germany divided itself into East and West (Gaddis, 2005). The development of "core" news agencies reflects in some ways the post-war economic and political configurations of power amongst world nations. This "core representation" in news flows and in news agreements amongst agencies

represents the exclusive form of control of information and the monopolisation over news flows by Western-based news agencies.²³

2.2.3 News imbalances and the (global) public sphere

The reality of a global-local (or “glo-cal”) public sphere (cf. Jacobson & Jang, 2002; Sparks, 1998; Sreberny, 2000; Thussu, 1998) and the centrality of news in a globalised world (Comor, 2003; Sreberny) are important in the process of democracy and participation. News flows could be encouraging a critical “global public sphere” (cf. Jacobson & Jang, Sparks). As much as news can be divisive (as seen in the example of content imaging above), it can also contribute to the integration of global social processes, including economic, political, and cultural processes and structures.

In the public sphere of societies where public opinion is formed, Leys (1999) argues that “public opinion is, in the last analysis, the only real weapon the democratic left can deploy against the greater economic and social resources of capital” (p. 314; see also Curran & Leys, 2000). These theorists share a common view that the reconfiguration of capital within an increasingly globalising world is profoundly affecting and influencing all spheres of social and institutional life but on an uneven basis in this world system (cf. Castells, 1996; see also Wallerstein, 1974).

An integrated world can mean a cooperating world, and this is important in such things as tackling climate change, nuclear protocols, and other social and political issues. Several authors already refer to a global and integrated public sphere as underway since the 1960s, in descriptions such as a “global village” (McLuhan, 1989, 1962) and the “network society” (Castells, 1996, 1997). This integration does not mean, however, equality and cooperation. It means an awareness of the existences of various peoples, cultures and other ‘identities’ of people. Since the 1980s, the term “globalisation” appears among these to suggest that and further to describe the

²³ The example provided by Boyd-Barrett (1980) is of the “early cartel” and this history is discussed in Boyd-Barrett and Thussu (1992), Boyd-Barrett (2000), Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (2000) and Read (1999).

phenomenon of the world growing more interconnected, cooperative, and characterised as “glo-cal” (Robertson, 1992).

In comparative cross-cultural studies, news flows were measured quantitatively using content analysis of newspapers. The aim was to show how much of news was flowing between developed and the developing nations, for instance, and the content of that news (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992; IPS, 1972; Kayser, 1953; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985). A study of great significance conducted by Jacques Kayser set the precedence in the use of content analysis in observing imbalances in news content. It included news reports in seventeen major daily newspapers around the world over one week. This trend was actually continued in later decades in studies on global imbalances in news flows.

These quantitative-data studies also used qualitative analysis to understand the implications of the quantities of news and its content.²⁴ Typically, these studies were triangulated and used mixed methods (i.e., quantitative and qualitative methods). They were conducted often by a contingent of researchers or research teams with access to supporting technical and financial resources, and they were usually commissioned by specialist organisations such as UNESCO (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002; Nwosu et al., 1995). These were studies conducted over a span of several (up to seven) years.

Four important and significant studies on global flows, commissioned at UNESCO and published in 1953,²⁵ 1980,²⁶ 1985,²⁷ and 1992,²⁸ respectively, are significant.

²⁴ See Babbie (2007), Creswell (1994), and Punch (1998) for clarity on the differences between quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and data analysis, and the purposes of each paradigmatic enquiry in research.

²⁵ ‘*The flow of news*’, 1953, UNESCO

²⁶ Also known as The MacBride Report, published as ‘*Many voices, One world*’, 1980, MacBride, UNESCO. Note: Boyd-Barrett, Thussu 1992, Boyd-Barrett, and Rantanen 1998 use “McBride” spelling as opposed to the proper, MacBride.

²⁷ Sreberny-Mohammadi et al 1995, ‘*Foreign news in the media: international reporting in 29 countries*’, UNESCO

These studies were undertaken and their findings framed within the political context of the Cold War period, except for the 1992 study. The first of these studies (in 1953) produced a report to “address the unequal balance of power in international news flows” (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992, p. 1). It was critical of the imperialist tendencies of the larger news operations of Western-based news agencies and of the resulting dependencies it created in developing nations on the news feeds to these networks. Imperialist tendencies among global operations of these Western agencies also impeded the direct participation of developing nations’ emerging news agencies in selecting news from their geo-political regions for wider distribution. Global agencies decided which items of news that they selected would be put out for distribution to media markets.

The second of these studies was the MacBride Commission’s report.²⁹ Following its findings, an International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) was set up at UNESCO in the 1980s as an attempt at democratising global access to and penetration of information to developing nations, which were at the time quite marginalised in the global news scene (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992, p. 2).

The third and fourth studies of significance that were commissioned from the mid-to late-1980s and early 1990s, respectively, include a study by a team of researchers headed by Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi in 1985 and a study completed by researchers Boyd-Barrett and Thussu in 1992. The empirical study by Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. (1985) used quantitative and qualitative content analysis of newspaper, television, and radio reports and focused mainly on one aspect of global

²⁸ Boyd-Barrett and Thussu 1992, ‘*Contra-flow in global news: International and regional news exchange mechanisms*’, UNESCO. It began in the 1980s and was completed in the early 1990s.

²⁹ The [MacBride] Commission was established [in 1977] to study mainly four aspects of global communication. These included; the current state of world communication, the problems surrounding a free and balanced flow of information, how the needs of the developing countries link with the flow, and how, in the light of the NIEO [New International Economic Order], a NWICO [New World Information and Communication Order] could be created. Finally, how media could become vehicles for enlightening public opinion about world problems.

news flows, the imbalance of coverage of international news from local media. Twenty-nine countries globally were studied and included seven African countries, three Latin American countries, three Middle East countries, five Asian countries, six Western European countries, one North American country, and four Eastern European countries. A team of four researchers collated the result. The study concluded that news content was overwhelmingly about politics and political actors of the developed world and that “the global structure of news gathering and dissemination . . . more or less followed the global flow of economic and political power” (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985, p. 14; see also Sreberny & Stevenson, 1999, p. 60).

Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. (1985) found that international news flows were dominated by the “big four Western news agencies” [Reuters, Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, and United Press International], which were “able to set a substantial part of the international news agenda” (see also Sreberny & Stevenson, 1999, p. 60). This empirical study was recorded as the largest undertaking in news flows of its kind (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985).

In 1997, two of the original members of the research team on the 1985 study, Sreberny and Stevenson (1999), attempted a follow-up study (see Nordenstreng & Griffin’s 1999 report). Sreberny and Stevenson (1999, p. 62) state that studies engaging with global news and information flows have shown a remarkably similar pattern that seems to have “solidified into a pattern structured on Cold War rivalries and tensions.” Such studies, they say, concluded on evidence that the United States and Western Europe are the consistent and continual newsmakers of the world. Furthermore, the concluded that the Third World is consistently represented as the

“hot spot” in news and that (in the 1985 study) the world of state socialism was relatively and comparatively invisible in international news.³⁰

Their follow-up study was broad-based, comparative, and similar to the one conducted in the mid-80s, but the global socio-economic, political, and cultural environment had changed significantly. The Cold War ended in the late 1980s with the onset of strategic changes and reforms (*perestroika*) taking place in the USSR during the reign of then President Mikhail Gorbachev, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and a spate of electoral triumphs in the overthrow of communism in Poland, Hungary, and other Eastern European countries in the 1990s. These social and political events signified, for the Western world, the triumph of capitalism, globally, as a socio-economic and political system that would spread rapidly from the 1990s to all other nation-states (cf. Fukuyama, 1999).

Sreberny and Stevenson's (1999) follow-up study concluded the following: there were suggestions that changes in global news coverage were apparent. For example, news about the Third World had increased quantitatively. Furthermore, the dominance of the Western news agencies was seen to be diminishing in some of the regions that participated in the study, particularly in Europe. News in Central and Eastern Europe was more directed towards the West, and the United States enjoyed a new status as “news superpower.” They also found that regional and national linkages in news flows remained unchanged and were mainly defined by politics and economics in reports (pp. 69-70).

Studies by Boyd-Barrett (1980), Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998), Boyd-Barrett and Thussu (1992), Harris (1981), IPS (1972), and Sreberny-Mohammadi et al.

³⁰ The rationale for a follow-up study was based on the changing global political and economic environment including the end of communism (state socialism), changes in technological developments, economic shifts, and trends towards media corporatism with the rise in multinational and trans-national media giants. These changes they have argued have reshaped the global scene of international news gathering (Sreberny & Stevenson 1999:62).

(1985) described the nature of imbalances as pertaining mainly to the content of news reports, the focus of news, and the directional flow of information mainly from the larger global news agencies to the national news agencies (as indicated in Figure 2-1). The studies were critical of news reports being overwhelmingly about the developed world nations and their leaders, and the corresponding over-emphasis on negative news stories from developing nations (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992; De Beer & Steyn, 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985; cf. Sreberny & Stevenson, 1999; Carruthers, 2004).³¹ Later studies have presented the argument that the global news agencies, because of the power that they wield in news production and distribution, monopolise the flow of news (and its selection and distribution) and influence of global news flows at the local levels³² (Chang, 1998; Chang et al., 2000).

Importantly, there are still no direct news exchange agreements among developing nations' national news agencies (as indicated in Figure 2-1 above). National news agencies still rely on the global news agencies for news from other continents and regions. National news agencies have no control over the content of foreign news (what they receive from global news agencies) or over the selection of news from their national contexts that global agencies distribute to their international news clients.

Reporting on events from developing nations and in other social contexts is largely fragmented and de-contextualised. This means that the historical and social backgrounds, which explain events from these contexts, are lost. This especially happens in "political reporting" as Golding and Elliott (1979, pp. 13-14) illustrated in their classic study. Golding and Elliott (p. 13) speak of the "unwitting bias" in the coverage of events in which reporters unwittingly shape the event, as they perceive it

³¹ International Press Institute 1972, Harris 1981, Boyd-Barrett 1980, Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998, cf. Schiller 1998.

³² See Boyd-Barrett and Thussu (1992); Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998); Boyd-Barrett (2000); cf. Curran and Gurevitch (2000).

to be. They cite as a case study³³ the coverage of an anti-Vietnam war rally in London in 1968:

The London demonstration was very largely [sic] a peaceful and orderly affair marred by violence between a small breakaway group and the police. Yet, press and television coverage was almost entirely focussed on these incidents. The authors of the study concluded that coverage of the event . . . reinforced the retrospective perception of the demonstration as a violent, irrational and indeed non-political confrontation, a view which has passed into history. (p.13)

In summary, global news agencies were powerful beyond the national and continental news agencies and were said to dominate the global context of news flows. This situation of imbalances based on these studies reviewed above creates an unequal and a globally undemocratic system of news and information flows. It also creates a bias³⁴ in the representation and presentation of events for global news audiences who receive news about other social contexts via global agencies' selection of news from these contexts. Other studies have described these biases as the over-representing of western leaders as "mediators", "aid-givers" and solution-seekers in conflict situations, particularly in developing nations, and the overwhelming negative framing of non-western contexts (Carruthers, 2004; Sreberny & Stevenson, 1999; see also Nordenstreng & Griffin, 1999).

2.3 Internal and external pressures on news agencies in the global flow of news

The news product that news agencies distribute is the result of the interaction between the journalist and the social context. A journalist on the scene—reporting an event, making enquiries about an event from interviews with other social actors, or accepting press statements and press releases—is involved in a process of interaction with the social context from which news is ultimately produced. Journalists are aware that they must maintain certain journalistic norms and objectives in performing their

³³ Graham Murdock (1973); Political deviance: the press presentation of a militant mass demonstration, in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds.), *The manufacture of news*, pp. 156-175, London: Constable.

³⁴ Golding and Elliott (1979: 12) define 'bias' as a notion that implies a position of balance from which news can be influenced by prejudice, intrigue or the 'malign influence of political and commercial outsiders'.

role of acquiring information for news reports, and this pre-empts the process of selection. At news agencies, it is the editor or the bureau chief who does the selection of daily news and reports on a daily basis in order to place these items on the news wires. A simplified description of the activity between the news journalist and society (i.e., between the social actor, process, and structure) is that news agencies hire journalists to produce a product, news. An extensive and wide reaching network of exchanges with other subscribing and different levels of news agencies distributes the news product gathered by journalists. As such, news agencies play a significant part in influencing or, at best, shaping the final product that is in constant circulation between societies.

A transformation has taken place in the profession of journalism over the 20th century that has seen the nature of news transforming from hard to soft news.³⁵ The traditional hard focus of news that was primarily derived from informing (rather than entertaining) and educating and encouraging critical debate, as well as its “fourth estate function”³⁶ within civil democracies, has largely been lost (cf. Bennett, 2003; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948; Lippmann, 1922, 1950; see also Graber, 1990; Gudykunst & Mody, 2002; Marris & Thornham, 1996). That critical focus has succumbed to various social, economic, and structural pressures that influence the role of news producers and the product. The focus is more on entertainment than on informing, and some authors’ state that this results in the commoditisation of news³⁷ (Schudson, 2000; Thussu, 1998). Some authors refer to “soft news” as “infotainment”

³⁵ Hard news refers to news stories with a specific focus on issues of politics, economics, war, crime and so on, while soft news refers, generally, to entertainment news, adverts, arts and leisure. However, the lines between the two often become blurred when for instance, scandals about the personal lives of politicians and such are reported as ‘news’. Furthermore, the element of investigation to obtain facts, in journalism, is lost when time and speed overtake accuracy and details. Soft news or “yellow journalism” (as referred to in Kumar, 2004, pp. 53-4) seems to be the ‘easier’ option in reporting events because a large part of this is about entertaining audiences to boost revenues.

³⁶ Fourth estate is a term associated mainly with the press and the ability of the press to exercise power in social communications through reporting on issues such as, for example, corruption in government departments. The fourth estate is the ability of journalists to exercise this power and earned them the name of guardians or watchdogs of democracy. Fourth estate journalism is associated with the democratic ideals of a critical and informed citizenry in which the media’s role is to preserve a participatory democracy and foster critical public debate.

³⁷ Like any product or commodity, news is bought and sold on a demand and supply basis.

(Bennett, 2003, p. 100-103; Thussu, 1998, p. 70), which is information that predominantly seeks to entertain and draw in larger audiences to boost revenues. Infotainment news is based on sensationalism and sensationalizing events, rather than the “hard news” issues associated with investigative journalism (Bennett, 2003, p. 12-13; Kumar, 2004, p. 53-4).

A persistent paradox facing the nationally based and continental news agencies located in the developing world of so-called South nations is the ambivalent relationship they have with the more advanced global news agencies of the developed North. Nwosu et al. (1995) argue that “all African nations engaged with the West are linked to the cultural and social issues of the West” (p. ii). For these authors, the rise of communication systems and their use in the social transformation in Africa was, from its inception, influenced by the capitalist system such that communicationists [sic] in Africa are not free of the biases of that system (Nwosu et al., 1995, p. ii; cf. Barratt & Berger, 2007; Chang et al., 2000). According to Nwosu et al. (1995, p. 1), very little discussion has taken place on the role of communication in uniquely African contexts, particularly with regard to information flows (see also Carruthers, 2004).

Faringer (1991) highlights another important historical difference in the development of the mass media systems of developing Third World nations compared to those of developed Western industrialised nations. For the majority of developing nations around the world, their mass media did not arise in the context of booming economic growth (industrialisation) as it did in many Western countries (Faringer, 1991, p. ix). Instead, Third World media systems developed around issues of political independence and the consolidation of national economic and political structures following post-colonial independence (Bourgault, 1995; Faringer, 1991, p. ix; see also Karikari, 2007; Kupe, 2007).

Furthermore, Faringer (1991) states that other problems accompanied the rise of media systems in the developing nations: “insufficient financial resources, illiteracy, plurality of languages, and continuing dependency on former colonial powers” (p. ix). This presents complex sets of issues in defining a relationship between the various news agencies on the developing African continent and the developing world in general. To date, there has been insufficient rigorous investigation in information flows in Africa, and following the end of the Cold War where significant global changes and developments have taken place, this area remains open to research.

As Third World nations, including those in Africa, gained independence from colonial rule and began addressing their structural media needs with the support of UNESCO, their national news agencies were being set up (Karikari, 2007). News agencies were “naturally” state-owned and state-run after the newly independent “democracies” emerged (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, p. 5; cf. Curran & Park, 2000). In the African nations’ early years of independence, the state was meant to play a major role in democratisation and development, in leadership, and in the formation of national sovereignty (Karikari, 2007). In previous studies on global news flows, the African continent has been under-represented and in shortfall even in cross-cultural and international news flow studies (cf. Sreberny & Stevenson, 1999). Usually, the emphasis is on clustering the developing world regions together as one aspect of research in comparison with individual western nations (Curran & Park, 2000; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1995, 1997). Africa remains a continent on which individual nations’ news and media systems require in-depth and extensive research.

With the onset of democracy in the context of South Africa (around 1994), the role of the press was seen to contribute to ushering in democracy (Louw, 1991; Tomaselli et al., 1987). To illustrate, a book series by Tomaselli et al. (1987, 1989, 1991), *Addressing the Nation: Studies on the South African Media*, provides detailed analyses of the development of the South African media, particularly the press, in a highly politicised, racially divided, and volatile apartheid South Africa. They show

how the social context interfaced with the political structure to obstruct media democracy and how the (print) media, in its turn, either employed various tactics to bypass the oppressive state system or conspired with the system as an ideological tool propagating messages of the state.

2.3.1 News flows in developing contexts and in Africa

Curran and Park (2000) criticise the tendency of Western media critics to lump together the developing nations as if they all equally share the same global and local problems concerning the development of their media (cf. Barratt & Berger, 2007). Curran and Park offer important insights into the differences among nations of the developing 'South' when an evaluation and definition of their media systems is undertaken. They believe that not all developing nations' media can or should be labelled as belonging to the "South." Social contexts influencing the media systems operating in the diverse settings of so-called South nations exhibit key differences including varying results in the societies in which they operate. Rønning and Kupe (2000) have described the historical development of the print media (the press) in developing countries as "media [that] carry contradictions [and] which have their roots in the colonial period...where counter public spheres with an alternative media structure provide opposition to this" (p. 158).

M'Bayo and Onwumechili (1995, p. 120)³⁸ state that the debates and programmes on communication supported at UNESCO have had a profound influence on the communication systems all over the world (see also UNESCO World Communications volumes). They argue that the debates occurring at UNESCO in which the Western world took the lead, especially Western European and USA communicators at the end of the Second World War, endorsed a free flow of information principle³⁹ that became entrenched in communication policies amongst

³⁸ See also Onwumechili and M'Bayo (1995).

³⁹ See Oosthuizen (1989). What the 'free flow of information' meant was an opening up of the developing world nations' and the newly independent, post-colonial nations' social contexts for the

nations. The free flow of information principle was supported at UNESCO with the belief that it would encourage national economic development and political cooperation and that international communication would sustain world peace⁴⁰ (M'Bayo & Onwumechili, 1995, p. 120). Instead, this gave developed nations' businesses and multi-national corporations open access to developing markets.

An important paradox emerges from the framing and use of the term "free flow of information." Several authors have associated the popularizing of the phrase free flow of information in communications and media with neo-liberalism and equated this with a free market or capitalist approach (Comor, 1997, 2000; Vincent et al., 1999; cf. Curran & Leys, 2000). The free market philosophy, which underpins neo-liberal policy, ensures the ultimate freedom of capitalist growth and global expansion. Paradoxically, this principle has not limited the market's intervention in or domination of information flows (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001, pp. 36-38, pp. 47-49; cf. Herman & McChesney, 1997; McChesney, 1997; McChesney et al., 1998). The free flow of information principle arose within a transforming global context of world events following the end of the Second World War. This included a remodelling and re-integration of world markets after the war and the rise of a bi-polar ideological battle between two dominant blocs under conditions of a Cold War (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Nwosu et al., 1995; Thussu, 2000; see also Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 2003).

A further contradiction is the definition of the 'free flow' of information regarding news production and exchange. According to Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p. 8), the "free flow of information principle" arose alongside capitalist expansionism

'exchange' of information and the setting-up of information 'markets' in these contexts. See Vincent et al (1999), Nordenstreng and Griffin (1999).

⁴⁰ The free flow of information principle derived, among other things, from the free market exchange system. It was opposed by the newly emerging post-colonial nations of the so-called Third World who saw it as, yet another form of cultural, economic and political domination and neo-imperialism on the part of the more developed nations of the First World (see Sreberny and Stevenson 1999, also see Mattelart 1979, Golding and Harris 1997, Thussu 1998).

and the open market. The idea in this open market of news was the unrestricted flow of goods and services (cf. Mowlana, 1997; Oosthuizen, 1989). In the global flow of news, Western liberal media systems were the international and the assumed universal standard for setting the values that define what news is and what it should be (see chap. 6). This has set limitations on developing a global news ethos representative of a variation or diversity in news selection and production. In general, a universal Western standard (of journalism) dominates news production and news selection (Curran & Park, 2000; De Beer & Steyn, 1996; Thussu & Freedman, 2003; Tomaselli & Dunn, 2001).

Globally, the free flow of information has not led to nor meant more democracy nor equal access and equal participation of South nations' media in the global flow of information. In fact, the free flow of information principle seems to have further alienated non-western media structures from managing and influencing global news. In short, underlying this principle since the late 1940s are subtle power relations suggestive of neo-imperialistic media domination (Golding & Harris, 1997; Hamelink, 1994; Sreberny & Stevenson, 1999). The argument of a global monopoly of information flows and of global media imperialism lost impetus in the 1990s, but remain complex issues to be dealt with in the new millennium with new social problems emerging in the realm of international communication (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002; Nordenstreng & Griffin, 1999). The concept of power in news flows is relevant in relation to the monopolisation debate and imbalances in the relationships of news exchange among news agencies.

Following the end of the Second World War, the ebb and flow of discourses and counter-discourses arising at UNESCO contributed to the politicisation of news exchange and news flows between nations. Political positions, particularly in the sense of East/West confrontation, further polarized debates concerning global communications and information exchange and the role that communication and information should play in the developing world contexts. The findings of the

MacBride Commission and its recommendations, for instance, became a major backdrop against which developing nations viewed the situation in information flows at that time. The Commission's recommendation was the setting up of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), which was supported mainly by the Non-Aligned Movement of nations (NAM).⁴¹

The result was that post-colonial developing nations took it upon themselves to advance their own counter-ideological position to the free flow of information, which included self-development, self-advancement, and non-dependency (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992; Golding & Harris, 1997; see also Hoogvelt, 2001). The rationale behind the NAM alliance was not only to distance the developing nations from the bipolar ideologies of Cold War politics, but also to counteract the dominance of a growing transnational and international communication order fostered by Western nations (Vincent et al., 1999).⁴²

Continental and national news agencies emerged around the mid- to late-20th century in South America, Asia, and Africa (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998). At the time of their independence from colonial rule (roughly from the late 1960s to the 1970s), newly industrializing nations of the Third World in Africa began setting up national

⁴¹ Preceding the decade of the 1970's, twenty-five countries of the developing world nations forged a relationship under the title of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in reaction to the bipolar global politics of the Cold War. NAM members saw their needs and participation on the global scene as being marginalised by the East-West conflict of the Cold War. In 1963, independent nations in Africa formed the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (since 2003), and in 1965 the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) saw strategic alliances being created between the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand (Kumar 2004:113) all in tandem with the NAM position.

⁴² See also Thussu et al. (1998), Mohammadi (1997), Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. (1997), Vincent et al. (1999), Nordenstreng and Griffin (1999). The end of the Cold War saw the untimely end of the guiding philosophies around maintaining continental news agencies including the retreat of the NAM voices (see Nwosu et al., 1995, Golding & Harris, 1997). Another significant reason for the decline and the lack of influence in fostering the growth and expansion of regional news agencies probably has to do with their own internal logic and crises than merely with the transforming global socio-economic, political and cultural environment. Some theorists point to such things as funding crises and economic inactivity, the inability to attract and maintain a subscriber base, internal politics, state interference and structural incoherence and other political regional and national dynamics such as civil unrests. See Curran & Park (2000), Thussu (1998), Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998).

news agencies. Alternatively, already existent news agencies, as in the case of the Press Trust of India, were transferred or purchased from the colonial rulers to the newly independent governments (Bourgault, 1995; Karikari, 2007; Kupe, 2007; Rønning & Kupe, 2000).

In comparing the African national news agencies to their continental counterpart, a further anomaly abounds. Continental news agencies such as the Pan African News Agency (PANA) in Africa and the Organisation of Asia Pacific News Agencies (OANA) in Asia were founded on the ideology of self-help and self-development of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).⁴³ These ideologies (of self-development and conscientisation amongst developing nations) were popular in dependency theories such as the form of conscientisation espoused in independent Latin American countries and in India. These ideas formed the main thrust of the NAM's movement for overcoming their own dependencies on the communist East or West and meeting their developmental challenges⁴⁴ (Golding & Harris 1997; cf. Escobar, 1995).

Barratt and Berger (2007) recently attest to a gaping neglect on studies in the African context, especially amongst African scholars. Other explanations may include the inaccessibility of a continent, which has for decades been ravaged by civil wars and the lack of developed media systems (Faringer, 1991), and media systems that are generally state-run (Karikari, 2007; Kupe, 2007). The isolation of Africa in the global social sphere (cf. Amin, 1997; Chang, 1998), the restrictions of press freedom in many parts of Africa (Nwosu et al., 1995; Faringer, 1991), and the disinterest in the continent (Carruthers, 2004) add to this neglect. In comparison, the democratisation

⁴³ South Africa was at the time an exception in Africa because its independence and democratisation came only in the 1990s (following the end of apartheid governance). However, its news agency which operated independently of the Afrikaner apartheid government (under the Reuters news agency) was 'inherited' and bought over from Reuters news bureau in South Africa in 1938 by the privately owned South African newspaper groups (cf. Forbes 1998).

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, however, this ideology does feed into the 'us-them' mentality held even by the developed world nations in relation to developing and underdeveloped nations, and economic and politically powerful nations in relation to less powerful and powerless nations. Such thinking only widens the gulf between nations.

of Eastern European countries occurred only since the 1990s. They too have faced decades of internal civil wars and conflicts. Yet, a significant number of studies have been conducted on revamping their media systems and their reincorporation into the global system (Curran & Park, 2000; Gudykunst & Mody, 2001; Mohammadi, 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997).

2.3.2 State control and government ownership of news agencies in Africa

According to Bourgault (1995, p. 177), the media systems that evolved from the colonial past in these parts of Africa largely inherited their nationalist and stereotypical colonial administration after independence. National news agencies in Africa emerged within their respective socio-historical and political contexts. They were formed from the colonial period processes and structures, and despite post-colonial shifts where these media have undergone intrinsic changes, they still tended in the 1970s and 1980s to adhere to state-controlled and centrist operations, with a few exceptions (Barratt & Berger, 2007; Curran & Park, 2000).

South Africa remains the only country on the African continent with an independent, privately owned news agency (Barratt & Berger). Other African countries do have independent and privately owned news operations among newspapers, but the dominant broadcasting and national news agencies remain under state ownership and control (Karikari, 2007; Kupe, 2007; cf. Rønning & Kupe, 2000). The ownership of news agencies in Africa has implications for the relationships of African news agencies with foreign and global news agencies and for information flows. Ongoing structural changes both in news flows and in the relationships amongst news agencies in Africa is a neglected area of research.

In Africa, media systems were influenced by French and British and, to a lesser extent, Portuguese, German, and Spanish and Italian language media models (cf. Curran & Park, 2000). For example, the South African and Zambian broadcasting

media were modelled inherently on the British media model⁴⁵ (Banda, 2003, p. 29; Barratt & Berger, 2007; see also Bourgault, 1995). During apartheid, South African broadcasting came strictly under the control of the apartheid state, but the newspaper industry was controlled at the time by private businesses, particularly by private “English and Afrikaner capital” as Tomaselli (1997) and Tomaselli and Louw (1991) point out.

In part, it is true that state control of the media systems in developing nations is a threat to democratic information flows, but on the other hand, the only alternative that has been to this is given as the private Western media models (Curran & Park, 2000; Thussu & Freedman, 2003). Within these developing contexts, research interests and foci have also been slanted toward more pressing social issues and concerns around political and economic development (Faringer, 1991; Nwosu et al., 1995; cf. Schramm, 1964) and more recently to issues of climatic change and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Previous studies identified the problem lied with the influence that the dominant news agencies possess in producing and disseminating news and in facilitating where and how news flows. In other words, global news agencies monopolised information flows. These media organisations are also said to “frame reality” by determining the outcomes of relationships with other (non-global) news agencies (classical works by Tuchman, 1978; Cohen & Young, 1981; see also Crigler, 1999; Gamson, 1999). Furthermore, the view that global agencies dominate the flow, content, and quantities of news would have an impact on what audiences are told to think about (Bennett & Klockner, 1999; Lippman, 1950).

The next section presents the theoretical framing of the study. It integrates political economy and cultural studies approaches within a neo-Marxist framework.

⁴⁵ See Z. Jansen (1994) on the history of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

2.4 Theoretical perspectives relevant in the 21st century

The following section deals with the latest trend in theorising global media and related issues, namely, multi-national corporatism and monopolisation. A main, traditional theoretical position critically analysing media and media processes has been political economy perspectives. A competing theoretical position to political economy has traditionally come from various strands in cultural studies. The work of Stuart Hall of the Birmingham School, Raymond Williams and JB Thompson, and more recent strands in the post-1990s, including the post-structuralist theorist Michel Foucault,⁴⁶ pose theoretical challenges to the political economy perspective (Gudykunst & Mody, 2003; Mosco, 1996; Schudson, 2000). Later emerging theoretical approaches identified by Mosco and Schudson include policy studies and organisational or occupational routines theory, respectively.

While each of these theoretical perspectives have maintained rigid disciplinary boundaries, since the late 1990s, the trend in theorizing about media and media processes has been to synthesise or find a common ground between various theoretical approaches. Such theoretical synthesis has been particularly successful with the finding of common ground between the traditionally competing political economy and cultural studies perspectives (Golding & Murdock, 2000; Mosco, 1996; Schudson, 2000). Each of these theorists—Golding, Murdock, Mosco, and Schudson—have with relative success integrated various aspects in these two competing theoretical traditions and overcome the rigid and polemical disciplinary boundaries between them.

The main theoretical tool for analysis in this study is the adaptation of Golding and Murdock's (2000) "critical political economy" approach. Theirs is a blending of mainstream political economy with cultural studies in the neo-Marxist tradition. Two other theorists' contributions are drawn on in this integrated and critical approach.

⁴⁶ Foucault did not focus directly on media analysis per se, but his analysis of the concept of power involved in various dimensions of human life such as knowledge production, sexuality and incarceration are illuminating to any analysis of social processes of production and exchange.

These are Michael Schudson (2000), with his emphasis on a *social organisations* approach, and Vincent Mosco (1996), with his synthesis of perspectives in which he attempts to bridge the gap between political economy, policy studies, and cultural studies. The latter mentioned theorists' approaches will first be summarised followed by a discussion of Golding and Murdock's critical political economy approach.

2.4.1 Michael Schudson on "the sociology of news production (revisited again)"

Schudson's main emphasis is on an understanding of the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of news. He presents a sociological analysis based on three different theoretical genres: political economy, cultural studies, and an organisational perspective. Schudson (2000, p. 178) notes that all three of the perspectives have their strengths and weaknesses and that all of them, even taken together, have so far fallen short of providing an adequate comparative and historical analysis of news production.

For instance, some studies have focussed on news content in news flows and have tried to understand how content impacts on both the nature of meaning and on audiences' reception (IPI, 1972; UNESCO, 1994). Other studies have adopted a comparative approach also focussing on the content of news but looking at it from various geo-political regions.⁴⁷ Still other studies have been concerned with how specific geo-political regions are presented and represented in news reports and the development of the media structures within these regions (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Chang et al., 2000; Curran & Park, 2000; De Beer & Steyn, 1996, 1997; Nwosu et al., 1995).

All of these studies have been particularly concerned with issues of global imbalances and inequalities in information exchange and news flows. In another group, there are those that take further into consideration the changing global news landscape and the phenomenon of globalisation influencing global media structures and news flow

⁴⁷ See Sreberny-Mohammadi et al 1985, Sreberny et al 1997, Boyd-Barrett and Thussu 1992.

(Boyd-Barrett, 2000; Curran & Park, 2000; Rantanen, 2005; Thussu, 2000). Taken together, these studies span several related (and interrelated) disciplines.

All three theoretical strands in Schudson's (2000) approach—political economy, cultural studies, and organisational theory—recognise that news is a form of culture, that it is “a structured genre, or sets of genres, of public meaning-making. [It] . . . is a material product and there are political, economic, social and cultural dimensions to understand its production, distribution and appropriation [consumption] by audiences” (p. 179). Schudson (p. 178) believes that the value in choosing one or more of these perspectives depends largely on “what aspect of ‘news’ one wants to explain”: Is it the system-maintaining character of news and therefore the ideological function of news? Is it the extent to which the press in liberal societies is adversarial about government or critical of a society's core values? Is it to understand the finer features of the news, such as why it focuses on individuals rather than on systems and structures? Alternatively, why is news so heavily dependent on official sources? Why has there been a “tabloidization” of news all over the world? In addition, an especially complex and controversial question, why is there a deviation of the media from “fair” and “objective” reporting? On the other hand, how is it that “fair” and “objective” reporting presents a picture of the world that overwhelmingly represents the views of elite groups in society? (p. 178).⁴⁸

2.4.1.1. Schudson on the political economy approach

According to Schudson (2000), “the view of political economy relates the outcome of the news process to the structure of the state and the economy, and to the economic foundation of the news organisation” (p. 177). The approach is concerned with the link between ownership of news organisations and the impact on news coverage, for example. Schudson admits that this link is not always easily determined, for instance, because of the blurring between public and commercial systems of ownership and

⁴⁸ cf. Tuchman 1978, Golding and Elliott 1979, Cohen and Young 1981, Bennett 1996, Berkowitz 1997, Hardt and Brennen 1995, Manoff and Schudson 1986, each of whose studies attempt to answer one or several of these questions taken together.

control (cf. Boyd-Barrett, 2000). A case in point is the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) move from being a traditionally public funded but independent broadcaster to having to acquire alternative corporatist means to generate revenue. Financial cutbacks and decreased state funding led the BBC to turn towards commercial broadcasting and increase its costs to advertisers in order to secure revenue (see also Golding & Murdock, 2000, pp. 75-76).

Schudson (2000, p. 179) gives another example of the blurring state-to-corporatist ownership and control pattern in Latin America. There, government officials benefited more from the state-controlled media than the public did. In China, a study by Zhao (1998) reveals how the blending of commercial and state-controlled media saw all news organisations engaging in self-criticism and self-censorship. In South Africa, during the reign of the apartheid government, mainstream privately owned media (the newspapers) practiced self-censorship to avoid closure, banning, and fines being imposed (Hepple, 1960; Tomaselli et al., 1987; Tomaselli & Louw, 1991). The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was also regulated by the apartheid state, which saw a form of hegemonic control exercised over information that the South African public received (Jansen, 1994; Louw, 1993).

The global trend toward media privatisation where, increasingly, large multinational corporations are merging their interests in acquiring various media products, including "news," has important consequences for news production and other news organisations (cf. Herman & McChesney, 1997). The illustration of tabloid media sensationalizing news reports was explained earlier. Similar to state-controlled media, multi-national and corporate media also have vested interests in the form and focus of the news, in influencing (albeit in an indirect manner) political campaigns, and in meeting the business interests of these multinational firms (Curran & Leys, 2000; Maynard, 2000).

In relation to this is the role that advertising plays in audience reception of media products. Schudson (2000, p. 178) believes that advertising is increasingly associated with various genres of media products in an attempt to attract specific kinds of audiences who have preferences for certain kinds of media products. He uses the example from Curran et al. (1980) where mainstream and elite British newspapers advertise quite different products despite reader surveys that found that different classes prefer to read similar materials. Curran et al. explain this phenomenon as the result of advertisers finding value in newspapers that attract certain (especially smaller, elite and concentrated) audiences with spending power.

A later finding in this same study established that this could be explained by an increasing “consumerisation” of media markets where audiences become the main commodity for attracting advertisers (Schudson, 2000, p. 178; see also Thussu et al., 1998). As already mentioned, news is a commodity; it serves audiences and markets that are further commoditised in the flow of information under the system of capitalism.

For Schudson, a central concern for a political economy approach is the link between ownership, commercialisation, and the related impact on the democratisation of information. He explains that there is a threat to democratic information flows (including audience participation and public intervention in media output) when media structures and media products are usurped not only by too much state intervention, but also by too much market intervention (cf. Croteau, & Hoynes 2000; Herman & McChesney, 1997; Kay, 2004). While it may appear that the market for media products and the increased consumerism of goods is offering the public a greater choice, this choice is limited to sections of the public with greater buying power. Various classes of individuals are either included or excluded in their ability to acquire certain media products.

Closely related to the above issues are a clear trend towards convergences in technologies, and the related impact on media organisations and media products including the news (cf. Bagdikian, 1997; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Latest technologies—such as computers, offering access to the Internet, or the cellular telephone—include sound and visuals with digital formats. These technologies are accessible mainly to those with purchasing power. Media content might appear to be more diversified, but Schudson (2000, pp. 178-9) argues that the limited few who control content also inhibit freedom of choice and freedom to access different information.

2.4.1.2. The influence of cultural studies

Cultural studies approaches are of considerable importance when issues of news construction and the social construction of reality are considered (Schudson, 2000, p. 189). In separate domains, cultural studies bring together the cultural significance of symbols and meaning construction on the one hand, and the organisational structures and their relevance to meaning making on the other hand. Neither of these two domains, according to Schudson, can be reduced to the other, but neither should they be analysed separately from each other. The production of news—which is the symbolic construction of meaning and represents the relationships between the individual journalists, editors, and media proprietors within and across media organisations—becomes an apparent concern for cultural studies theorists who tend to focus on “micro” rather than “macro” analyses as the political economy approach does.

According to Schudson (2000), “a cultural account of news helps explain generalized images and stereotypes in the news media . . . that transcend structures of ownership or patterns of work relations” (p. 189). This means that cultural analyses take issue with the construction of meaning, with signification and with symbols that are

embodied in concepts such as hegemony,⁴⁹ ideology, and the construction of race, ethnicities, feminisms, classes, and differences (cf. Hall et al., 1980, 1978; Tomaselli et al., 1987). The concepts all figure prominently in cultural studies (see also Bennett et al., 1987; Hall et al.). The media are said to operate not within a vacuum, but within cultural systems that employ cultural symbols that generate meaning, which interfaces with the media structures from the social contexts in which they operate.

To illustrate, Tomaselli et al. (1987) explained how the apartheid government adopted a strategy of part-force and part-hegemonic⁵⁰ control to persuade media audiences of the legitimate authority of the apartheid state. The states of emergency that were declared during apartheid in the 1970s and mid-1980s, for instance, were when broadcast on air, portrayed from the vantage point of the state exercising legitimate authority and control to avoid “civil unrest” in the “townships.” The airing of these civil crises were presented as the state in control of the situation to stem the uprising and to convince mainly white audiences of the apartheid state’s securing national stability. These reports used a mixture of fear and false sense of security quite similar to that employed in the USA media following the attacks on 9 September 2001 (Jansen, 2002; Rantanen, 2004). These forms of media content and influence in the media demonstrate hegemonic control by the state.

Schudson (2000) maintains that “[a] cultural account of news is also relevant to understanding journalists’ vague [sic] renderings of how they know ‘news’ when they see it” (p. 190). He cites a study by Stuart Hall (1973) in which Hall has tried to define the seemingly indefinable “news values” or “news sense” that journalists talk about. Hall writes: “News values are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in

⁴⁹ Global capitalism, because it is ubiquitous and dominant, may be described as a hegemonic process in the sense that it favours and is advantageous to multinationals and other trans-national commercial enterprises, and maintains a form of economic and cultural dominance of capital worldwide.

⁵⁰ This refers to Gramsci’s concept of hegemony in which general compliance is obtained not through forceful means but through the instituting of laws for instance.

modern society; all ‘true journalists’ are supposed to possess it [but] few can or are willing to identify and define it” (as cited in Schudson, 2000, pp. 190-191).

Schudson (2000, p. 191) acknowledges that cultural knowledge, which constitutes “news judgement,” is too complex and implicit to be labelled simply as “ideology” or the “common sense of a hegemonic system.” News judgement is not so unified, intentional, and functional a system as these terms might suggest. Instead, he maintains that the exercise of news judgement may be rooted more deeply in human consciousness (p. 191).

Schudson (2000, p. 192) uses the example of the news value, “immediacy” (i.e., the speed at getting news out before a competitor does), to illustrate that in “Western journalism” compared, for instance, to the previous state socialist control over journalism, immediacy did not figure prominently at all in the latter form of control. Schudson explains this difference as the “nation-specific rooted-ness [or values] in different political cultures.” In other words, in the previous USSR, “immediacy” did not take primacy over “state control” of information compared with Western liberal democracies where speed is central to capital and profit.

Tabloidization, which describes the increasing tendency for news to be “soft” rather than “hard,” or what Kumar (2004) refers to as “yellow journalism,” is another trend and feature in cultural analyses. For example, the appeal of gossip columns in newspapers and the “soap opera style” coverage of political news provide absorbing content to news markets (that ultimately hook these latter for advertisers). Tabloidization is a phenomenon that lends itself not only to cultural studies analyses, but also to organisational approaches concerning the demands on and changing role of the newspaper reporter or journalist. A news story is no longer good enough only with the facts, without additional presentation of what Boyd-Barrett (2000, p. 8) refers to as “infotainment fodder.” Drama attracts the curiosity of audiences, and this tends to be a cross-cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, the journalist has also become

the political analyst and commentator in news reports (particularly in broadcast news).

2.4.1.3. Organisational studies and the occupational routines approach in news production

The organisation of news work, according to Schudson (2000, p. 183), is based on the structural organisation of media workers vis-à-vis the production of media products such as news. This incorporates, but is not limited to, how the work of journalists, editors, photojournalists, and media personnel are confined to the routine operations of the organisation. An organisation's functional approach and its related policy practices, for example, determine its news sense and news judgements and shape its news values. In this, the organisational approach compliments both cultural studies and political economy approaches that each focus on the construction of the message and ownership and production, respectively.

Schudson (2000:189) states that in the organisational approach, news is “constructed” by the routine labour of news personnel. “Journalists write the words that turn up in the papers or on the screen as stories. Not government officials, not cultural forces, not ‘reality’ magically transforming itself into alphabetic signs, but flesh-and-blood journalists” (p. 176). The social organisational approach and its related “occupational routines approach” probably cause the most tensions and differences of opinions between social theorists, media critics, and media personnel (especially journalists). In this regard, Schudson relates the following anecdote:

Social scientists who study the news speak a language that journalists mistrust and misunderstand. They speak of “constructing the news,” of “making news,” of the “social construction of reality. . .” Even journalists who are critical of the daily practices of their colleagues and their own organisations find this talk offensive. Such language propels journalists into a fierce defence of their work, on the familiar ground that they just report the world as they see it – the facts, facts and nothing but the facts – and yes, there's occasional bias, sensationalism, or inaccuracy, but a responsible journalist never fakes the news. *That's not what we said*, the scholars respond. *We didn't say journalists fake the news, we said journalists make the news.* [Italics own] (p. 176)

The organisational approach has its roots in Weberian social theory⁵¹ and the branch of economics and behavioural psychology. It would be better employed with other key media theoretical perspectives such as cultural studies or political economy studies than on its own in a critical understanding of news production.

2.4.1.4. Criticism of Schudson's integrated approach

While Schudson provides a very convincing and thorough analysis, his views are presented largely from a “liberal pluralist” tradition. He tends to ignore the dynamics and complexities of other social contexts wherein “developing” or “mixed media” structures play significant roles in influencing media structures, ownership, and content. He does not clearly categorise or integrate alternative forms into his theoretical framework (cf. Curran & Park, 2000). Despite the fact that he draws on several studies conducted on contexts other than Western contexts, Schudson's analysis is severely lacking a clear analysis of developing media contexts, for example, in Africa (the example used from Tomaselli is the author's own example).

Schudson does however provide an illuminating and critical analysis of the conventionally competing arguments from political economy and cultural studies. He states that they “[have] too often neglected the specific social realities that can be observed at the point of news production; this is where news sources, news reporters, news organization editors . . . collect around specific choices of what news to report and how to report it” (as cited in Curran & Gurevitch, 2000, p. 175). His integrated approach therefore offers a more concrete examination of the media in society than the single approaches do.

2.4.2 Vincent Mosco and the integrated political economy of communication

In *The Political Economy of Communication* (1996), Mosco attempts to map the field of the intellectual development of the political economy approach and gives a

⁵¹ Ritzer describes Max Weber's works as “so varied and subject to so many interpretations that it has influenced a wide array of sociological theories.” For the purpose of this study, the relevance of Weberian ideas lies in his critique of modern Western society, the capitalist economy, and bureaucratic organisations. He associated the latter with an *iron cage rationality* within formally rational structures. Institutions, organisations, and social structures adhere increasingly to disciplined routines and processes to achieve their main ends or outcomes (cf. Ritzer, 2004, p. 134).

detailed exposition of the most recent changes in the political economy perspective. His aims to understand and examine the relationship of political economy to policy studies and cultural studies (p. 1) and he attempts to bridge the theoretical divide between political economy and these other approaches.

Mosco's approach begins with the belief that significant global changes—"social upheavals," as he calls them—have affected the theoretical foundations of all disciplines. These global changes are, according to Mosco (1996), "the defeat [sic] of communism, stagnation and transformation in capitalism, deepening divisions in what was once called the Third World, and the rise of social movements that cut across traditional class divisions" (p. 11, 15). According to Mosco, political economy has its foundational roots in a critique of the capitalist system of the 18th century. It draws from a range of intellectual currents and movements based mainly on Marxism, but inclusive of other analytical forms of thinking about democracy, communism, and socialism (p. 11).

The changing global environment in the 20th century has in part to do with the lead taken by media industries to advance the "economics of the communication." These industries enable the critical understanding of such processes as how to produce, market, and sell products to mass audiences (Mosco, 1996, p. 12). The result is a political economy that understands and is able "to connect mass marketing to wider economic and social processes and to criticize them from a range of humanistic values" (p. 12). This entry-point has its roots in "a Marxian framework" (p. 12).

The demise of communism in Eastern Europe presented a challenge to the Marxist theoretical framework, and this included the need to rework political economy perspectives. In communication studies, political economy models have drawn heavily from the communist world with its evidences and its aspirations as an

alternative to the market-based models of communication. They now have to re-orientate themselves amidst such global changes (Mosco, 1996, p. 12). A political economy that takes cognisance of the related economic, political, and cultural conditions in a changing global environment presents a critical response to evaluating and defining these conditions (Mosco).

According to Mosco (1996), being able to re-orientate the mainstream political economy approach would “lead to what Merton (1968) and Bell (1973) have referred to as the codification of knowledge or mapping the discipline” (p. 1). Nevertheless, Mosco seeks to avoid reductionism (evident in Merton and Bell’s views) by recognising that codes of knowledge are situated within social and historical contexts (p. 1). For him, social change can be understood from three processes: commoditisation, spatialisation, and structuration (p. 2). In adopting this three-process conceptual approach, Mosco makes it clear that his is but one “entry point to a political economy perspective” wherein he suggests there are multiple entry points to adapting political economy approaches to the study of social phenomena such as in communication (pp. 10-11).

To Mosco, social change should not be seen as one set of phenomena leading into another set of phenomena through time and space. In other words, change is not a linear “series of snapshots in time that take us from one set of essences to the next” (Mosco, 1996, p. 10). His approach is “anti-essentialist” in the sense that social change is ubiquitous, and it includes the mutual constitution of uneven development within and across a range of processes and actors in the social field (p. 10). To him, therefore, the political economy approach is just one entry point in the communication process that makes up the social field.

A political economy of communication has, according to Mosco (1996, p. 10), three “starting points”: an epistemological orientation based on realism, an ontological position that describes an approach to being that places social change and social

process in the foreground, and the view of change as ubiquitous. The ontological positioning aims to overcome the reductionism of relating social life to the characteristic social phenomena described in conceptual arrangements such as institutions, values, or structures. In this, it would appear that Mosco inherently shares the position of cultural studies that adopts social context as its frame of reference in understanding the creation of meaning (the text), but that also tends to isolate or fragment meaning (the text) from social context, allowing the analyses of meaning construction to stand apart, as it were, from generalised context.⁵²

According to Mosco (1996, p. 11), cultural studies bring an important dimension to the debate about communications and the role of the mass media in the social structure. He states that cultural studies draws on a range of disciplines, particularly literary criticism, hermeneutic social science, and various strands of structuralism and post-structuralism. Furthermore, cultural studies has levelled a strong and sustained critique of traditional science in its underlying epistemological, linguistic, and sociological foundations, but in turn, “it has been criticized for its relativism, idealism, and obscurantism” [sic] (p. 11).

The other related field in developing his core political economy approach is policy studies. The latter is, according to him, established on research traditions in political science, economics, and institutional political economy. It focuses on evaluating alternative courses of action to those of state and government, in relation to communication (Mosco, 1996, p. 11). “In contrast to cultural studies, public choice theory [the leading branch of policy studies] draws heavily from rational-actor models of society. [This] has influenced communication research chiefly in spirit (conservative) and in some of its less rigorous applications” (p. 11). Hence, where

⁵² This is a crucial position of analysis from a cultural studies perspective and, applying it to news production, news making tends to fragment different events in the world and dislocate it from the broader social contexts in which they occur. This does not allow a ‘true’ interpretation of that context or setting. For instance, when crime statistics are reported, the nature of the crime and the act itself is largely divorced from the social, political, and cultural realities that give rise to crime.

cultural studies fall short, the related policy studies approach adds to a political economy analysis.

2.4.2.1. Criticisms of Mosco

Skjerdal (1998) has criticised Mosco's interpretation in *The Political Economy of Communication* (1996) because he rejects what he describes as Mosco's description of political economy as the theoretical 'middle way' between other intellectual currents such as policy studies and cultural studies. For Skjerdal, political economy does not stand out as the reconciling discipline between cultural studies and other disciplines. Furthermore, it is argued here that while Mosco attempts to bridge the gap between political economy and other related disciplinary foci and to find a common ground between these competing views, he still relapses into an intellectual determinism. His outcome is still largely to present political economy approaches, central as they are to understanding communications and media structures in society, as the main "entry point" and the foremost theoretical venture in explaining the role and influence of communications and media.

According to Skjerdal, Mosco's political economy tends to reduce all analysis to class alone. From the discussion, Mosco refers to a 'critical political economy,' but does not develop this nor indicate the initial introduction of this synthesis approach from Golding and Murdock (1991). He does not even offer a critical interpretation or critique of Golding and Murdock's "critical political economy." There is a strong parallel between what Mosco proposes as a three-process analysis of communications in society—namely, commoditisation, spatialisation, and structuration (Mosco, 1996, p. 2)—and his acknowledgement of conceptual dualisms—subject and object, concrete and abstract, base and superstructure, empirical and theoretical" (p. 5)—and Anthony Giddens's (1989, 1994) deconstructionist thesis on *structuration theory*. However, Mosco does not develop this into his integrated approach.

Mosco portrays his renewed political economy approach as a negotiation between political economy and cultural studies (Skjerdal, 1998). The shortcoming is that he presents cultural studies as deficient in that it overlooks the social totality. Mosco, however, reverts to a tendency to elevate the political economy approach above other competing theoretical stances such as cultural studies and policy studies.

2.4.3 Critical political economy according to Golding and Murdock's integrated approach

Golding and Murdock (2000) explain their “critical political economy” of communication and the culture industries with an introduction to the term “critical.” Firstly, they state it is erroneous to think of the term “critical” as presenting a dichotomy between empiricism and theory. They use the term “critical” to embrace both an empiricist tradition that includes policy and administrative issues and as a theoretical tool within a “marxisant”⁵³ [sic] framework (p. 70). For them a “critical” approach “is centrally concerned with questions of action and structure” (p. 72). It is both empirical and theoretical inasmuch as it draws on a theoretically informed understanding of the social order in which communications and cultural phenomena are explored from political and economic analyses (p. 71).

A critical political economy is understood by them to include issues pertinent to political economy and cultural studies, which characteristically employ critical discourse and critical analysis. According to Golding and Murdock (2000, pp. 70-71), political economy and cultural studies share important similarities despite there being differences between them. Both approaches operate broadly from a *neo-Marxist and critical framework*, both are centrally concerned with the constitution and *concept of power*, and both are *critical of* and take their distance from the *liberal pluralist tradition* with its compliance to modern capitalism. Their approach is critical of the dominant and overarching cultural production systems that are advanced under a

⁵³ A “marxisant” framework refers to the political theorising of Karl Marx including, among other things, an analysis of the exploitative conditions of the working class under the system of capitalism, and providing a utopian analysis of social change.

capitalist market system. This system has unequal consequences for the range of discourses and representations in the public domain and in audiences' access to them (p. 71, own italics).

The following important differences exist between the two traditions: while political economy falls specifically within the social sciences and related disciplines of political science, sociology, and economics, cultural studies emanates predominantly from the humanities and the disciplines of literary and historical studies. Each approach furthermore tends to adopt inherently different interests and reference points to analysing communications and media in society despite "an overwhelming desire for both to overcome their disciplinary boundaries and cross-over into other disciplines" (Golding & Murdock, 2000, p. 71).

A critical political economy is a cross-pollination of various positions within the two perspectives, in that it is not only concerned with the realm of exchange of goods and the organisation of property and production (i.e., political economy), but also with the impact of the economy on the range and diversity of cultural goods and vice versa (i.e., cultural studies). "*Critical political economy is interested in the interplay between economic organisation and political, social and cultural life*" (Golding & Murdock, 2000, p. 73, own italics). It embraces two central features: epistemology and historicity.

Its epistemological leanings are based on a *realist approach* in that "the theoretical constructs it works with exist in the real world –they are not merely phenomenal" (Golding & Murdock, 2000, p. 72, own italics). A realist outlook is materialistic in that it considers the impact of material conditions and resources (or the lack thereof) in the real world and the subsequent inequalities over who commands control over both the material conditions and the symbolic environment (p. 72). They are

concerned with how action and structure affect social reality, but also, in its turn, how they are influenced by real constraints in society.⁵⁴

Secondly, critical political economy is steeped in history. It aims to formulate a critique of “late capitalism” that is understood by the authors as the socio-economic period spanning the second half of the 20th century (Golding & Murdock, 2000, p. 72). This period is defined as inherently full of contradictions and will ultimately undergo transformations (the authors embrace the Marxist thesis, although they do not propose, as Marx did, what the alternative outcome will be) (p. 72). They state: “[t]his historical anchoring of critical analysis [in history] is distinct from any approach that is essentialist, detached from the specifics of historical time and place” (p. 72).

Three core tasks emerge from integrating the conventional political economy with the cultural studies tradition of textual criticism and become central to “critical political economy.” These include, firstly, “the production of meaning as the exercise of power.” This can be seen clearly in the content-based analysis of news content as discussed in the review of previous studies. A second core issue concerns “political economy of textual analysis.” Even the written word becomes an *object* of finance as seen in the relationship between which books sell and garner profit. News production is no different. Hence, we speak of the commoditisation of products. The third core issue is the related aspect of *consumption*, important to both political economy and cultural studies analyses. It may include such areas of interest as a political economy of organisational structuring around consumption practices and production patterns such as ownership.

⁵⁴ Anthony Giddens (cf. 1979, 1984, 1997)) in his seminal thesis on *structuration theory* offers an insightful criticism and re-framing of the concepts action and structure in his proposed dualism of structure.

2.4.3.1 Critical political economy on media power and the culture industries

Drawing on Philip Elliott's (1982) studies of the eroding of the "public sphere" in Britain, Golding and Murdock (2000) propose that there is a continual shift away from involving the public as citizens in issues that matter to them in the production practices and outputs of the culture industries.⁵⁵ This occurs through "an array of forces that exercise control over cultural production and distribution [and] limit or liberate the public sphere" (p. 78). Earlier, in chapter 1, the concept of the public sphere was defined as a public realm or space in which ordinary citizens engage socially in discussing political issues and matters of concern in their society.

Two key concerns of critical political economy are the ownership of culture industries and the nature of the relationships between state regulation and communication institutions (Golding & Murdock, 2000, p. 78). Ownership of media and media products, for instance, has increasingly become concentrated in private hands of media oligopolies (i.e., transnational corporations or TNCs and MNCs) and media moguls (i.e., individuals such as Rupert Murdoch or Silvio Berlusconi). Critical theorists see the concentration of media as a warning sign of the threat posed to democracy, diversity, and access to information (cf. Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Herman & McChesney, 1997; Thussu et al., 1998). There is also the fear that proprietors (such as the two individual examples given above) would use their ownership rights to promote partisan political issues or denigrate others (Golding & Murdock, 2000, p. 78; cf. Boyd-Barrett, 2000). For example, recent news reports the controversy around the purchase by Rupert Murdoch of the Washington Post in the

⁵⁵ Culture industries, is a term used previously by the Frankfurt School, operating within a neo-Marxist framework. It is both symbolic and representative of media industries and products as well as all social and economic products used for consumption in the public sphere. News is an example of such a product. The Frankfurt School adopted a cultural analysis of media industries and of media messages seen to them as cultural products. Their conceptualisation of a "culture industry" foresaw what they believed and described as the role of modern mass media in shaping an uncritical and un-demanding consumer society through the bombardment of standardised information and in which a consumer culture through the mass media (and mass market) under capitalism would arise. See Anthony Giddens 1997, pp: 378. Also compare Curran 2000, Morley 1996, and Curran et al. (1996).

USA and the threat that the newspaper will be shifted towards the ‘right’ of the political spectrum in its coverage and reporting (Sky News, 2009).

On the other hand, state regulation of the media is seen to stem from attempts by the state to prevent an over-concentration and excesses in privatisation of media ownership. Regulation was rationalised in the interests of diversity and protecting public access to information and cultural goods. The transformed BBC from the 1990s is a good example of the move away from a regulated broadcasting industry to a private broadcasting industry (Schudson, 2000).

In South Africa, historically, white private corporations and businesses owned the South African newspaper groups. With democratisation of SA in 1994, these groups sold much of their exclusive ownership rights to black-owned media consortiums in a bid to avoid their fears of a completely nationalised media system by the new African National Congress (ANC)-led government (Tomaselli, 1997).

According to Golding and Murdock (2000), the past decade of the 1990s (in fact, since the political terms of office of Ronald Reagan in the USA and Margaret Thatcher in the UK, from the 1980s) saw a decline in state regulation, which saw the twin reality of growing privatisation practices and policies. According to the authors, “Liberalization policies have introduced private operators into markets that were previously closed to competition such as the broadcasting systems of a number of European countries” (p. 81). The result seems to be a further commoditisation of information and culture. Golding and Murdock refer to this as “the commandeering of public culture by private interests” (p. 81).

2.4.3.2 Golding and Murdock's approach to cultural studies within their critical political economy approach

Like political economy, cultural studies are divergent in interests and application.⁵⁶ Within cultural studies, Golding and Murdock (2000) identify at least two main areas of relevance to their critical political economy. One is concerned a great deal with the construction of meaning, particularly in the analysis of cultural texts. Media texts (i.e., newspapers, magazines, advertising billboards, and so on) are a part of meaning construction and are seen by cultural analysts as mechanisms for ordering social reality (p. 71). The focus on “meaning” is strongly situated in the social contexts from which narratives and texts derive.

Another focal area in cultural studies that is complementary to a critical political economy approach is the consumption practices of audiences and audiences' usage of texts to generate meaning. Audiences are seen as active agents in the production of media products (i.e., of culture) through their point of contact with socially produced texts, and in their reading, viewing, or listening to oral productions of texts. The focus here is on how audiences associate particular meanings to texts based on their own cultural and political history (Golding & Murdock, 2000). Cultural studies is critical of previous reception theories that reduced audiences to uncritical masses (e.g., as in the case of the Frankfurt School⁵⁷).

Cultural studies have long been concerned with the ideological operation of the mass media, for instance, in maintaining and supporting existing relations of power in societies. The work of Antonio Gramsci⁵⁸ was critical in this analysis even though

⁵⁶ Cultural studies, in the genre of critical discourse analysis, owes much of its development to theorists like Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, JB Thompson and, as will be added to in this discussion, the ideas expounded by French post-structuralist, Michel Foucault, on the concept of power.

⁵⁷ In the 1920s and 1930s, a group of neo-Hegelian Marxists known as the Frankfurt School began to formulate a ‘critical theory’ to analyse how the working class’s ‘false consciousness’ was the result of the triumph of ‘instrumental reason’ over ‘substantive reason’. See Janoski et al. (2005, p. 81).

⁵⁸ Antonio Gramsci formulated his concept of hegemony. The similarity of Gramsci’s hegemony and the concerns with cultural domination, ideology and class politics as used by the Frankfurt School is undeniable. In essence, the importance of hegemonic control exercised by the instruments of the state

Gramsci cannot be categorised as a traditional cultural studies theorist (nor can the Frankfurt School, *per se*). The earliest sociological analysis of “cultural” issues was undertaken by the Frankfurt School and following on from them, in the critical tradition, was social theorist Jürgen Habermas⁵⁹ with his conception of the “public sphere”—defined previously (see also Habermas, 1989; cf. Jansen, 1995).

In a global situation, an unregulated and privatised free flow of information is conducive to maintaining (rather than questioning) existing forms of power in society. This form of hegemonic control in societies sees the owners of modern media corporations collaborating with existing power elites in society. This is particularly a concern in Africa and other developing contexts where the situation is complicated by governments who own and control their media systems (Curran & Park, 2000). According to Callinicos (2002, p. 257), the exercise of hegemonic power and control is also justified in normative terms (i.e., in “value” frameworks) that are acceptable to the broader society. The case raised earlier about the apartheid state’s hegemonic power in the society through passing laws restricting and controlling the media, applies.

In a debate between McGuigan and Nicholas Garnham (as cited in Thussu, 1998, p. 91), Garnham believes that the concept of the public sphere has replaced hegemony as the concept that defines the core problems of media and cultural studies because media and cultural studies have become detached from social and political criticism. McGuigan, however, strongly supports the notion that the concept of hegemony is

through ideological means accounted for, in Gramsci’s view, no successful overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, the elite classes must constantly work to maintain their social position and they do this through promoting favourable ideas of themselves in order to continue in power. This encapsulates Gramscian hegemonic power/rule. See Jasper, in Janoski et al 2005, pp: 122. Also see Callinicos, (in Held and McGrew 2002, pp: 257) who develops Gramsci’s notion of hegemonic control, and states that while hegemony is understood primarily in ideological terms and in international theory hegemony is associated with dominance by a state, that a hegemonic structure of world order is one in which power primarily takes a consensual form.

⁵⁹ Habermas (1979) criticised the bureaucratization and scientific rationalization particularly of political information (i.e. distorted communication) that became removed from the understanding of the ordinary citizen and which contributed to the erosion of the public sphere. See Habermas 1989, also see Giddens 1997, pp: 378.

centrally important to a critical analysis of media power, “especially when the operations of ‘global media’ and local forms of subordination, resistance and negotiation are under consideration” (p. 91). These theorists are identified in Golding and Murdock (2000) as purveyors of the political economy approach (Garnham) and the cultural studies approach (McGuigan). Golding and Murdock attempt to consolidate the difference between political economy and cultural studies in reference to this debate between Garnham and McGuigan. If the main difference between political economy and cultural studies is conceptual and not much deeper than that, surely a common ground can be found in consolidating the two approaches. It appears that the arguments are indeed conceptual, but the concerns similar.

Thornton (2000) sheds more light on the debate between the above two theorists. He makes a similar point to McGuigan’s, that “hegemonic control is embedded in ‘mass’ and in ‘popular’ culture especially with respect to ideologies of race, class, gender and nation” (p. 29). Cultural studies, Thornton adds, “was born in the 1960s, and remains iconoclastic and critical of established power, elitism, ‘the West’ [sic] and the institutions of global capitalism, while seeking to understand the myriad forms of popular and post-colonial culture in their local, national and global dimensions” (p. 29). It appears that the fundamental rationale for the ‘critical’ focus in cultural studies complements aspects of political economy approaches. Both are occupied with issues of power, exploitation, and imbalances in relationships.

2.4.3.3 The introduction to post-structuralism in an integrated political economy—cultural studies

Thornton (2000) described the following:

Stuart Hall, a Jamaican Rhodes Scholar and one of the founders of cultural studies at Birmingham, pointed to two intellectual sources for cultural studies. These two roots were the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss and the ‘culturalism’ of the leftist historians, E.P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart, and Raymond Williams, on the one hand, and the Marxism of Antonio Gramsci on the other. (p. 36)

Hall added to this the ideas from Michel Foucault⁶⁰ and the influences of post-structuralism and postmodernism as celebrating “resistance” to dominant and hegemonic forms of culture as ideology. This is particularly evident in early British cultural studies concerned primarily with the analysis of public and mass media (Thornton, 2000, p. 36). Some of the themes taken up by Michel Foucault underpin relations of power, knowledge, discourse, and hegemony. Through this approach of assimilating post-structuralism into the debate, it is hoped that new directions to old arguments will be offered.

Foucauldian contribution suggests a relationship between issues of power, knowledge, and discourses of dominance in the use of specialised knowledge and of the apparent dispersion (fragmentation) of power throughout social structures. Foucault’s ideas fit in well with an integrated critical political economy approach because they resonate with the neo-Marxism in this approach. The central concept emerging in this study is that of power—power in relation to the global flow of news and in the relationships between national, continental, and global news agencies. These relationships are observable in the exchange agreements among them.

2.5 Conclusion

The focus of this study is not on the content of news, but rather on the power relationships among global, national, and continental (levels) of news agencies. Where previous studies looked at how news content was imbalanced in the coverage of different nations and found dominant coverage of developed over developing nations in news reports, this study questions in light of globalisation whether imbalances of news flows persist. It goes further and investigates imbalances in news flows in the relationships of exchange among agencies. Globally, news agencies are the main distributors of news to retail media.

⁶⁰ Foucauldian analysis recognises the transition in theorizing about the audience (or public) as object-subject, to active ‘agent’ and ‘participant’ in society. Foucault too is critical of the dominance of any system (structure) over the active agent in society, but his focus is on dominant discourses and the use of knowledge.

In the last two decades, this traditional role of news agencies as wholesale distributors of global news has been challenged by external market, political, and cultural changes within and between nations. This global change has been identified and discussed in the chapter under an ‘intermediary’ form of globalisation. This suggests that a new social order, in the 21st century, has emerged. As a result of external changes, news agencies come under pressure to adapt or adjust their operations to remain in the news environment. Ironically, the global news agencies are particularly vulnerable because their operations have been merged with the global capitalist system, a system in crisis within a globalised world.

Some previous studies have been identified as formulated and executed in the context and historical period of the Cold War.⁶¹ These have therefore adopted theoretical frameworks of neo- and cultural-imperialism. They tend to look at news agencies from the location within the nation-state and, therefore, map the relationships among news agencies as reflecting the socio-economic and political relations among nations of the developed and developing worlds. Other studies were framed from the emergent global North-South context—a context that became more deeply entrenched—following the end of the Cold War.⁶² North-South divisions became the main preoccupation of world system theory and dependency theory. Still other studies revamp the socio-economic and political period immediately following the Second World War (1945-1950s).⁶³

These studies are overwhelmingly coming more from the developed First World nations than from developing nations.⁶⁴ This might partly be explained by the fact that media systems in developing contexts are in transformation as these societies are transforming, particularly in Africa (cf. Carruthers, 2004; Faringer, 1991; Nwosu et

⁶¹ See overviews by McDowell 2002, Nordenstreng and Griffin 1999, Vincent et al 1999.

⁶² See Chang 1998, Chang et al 2000, Curran and Park 2000, Sreberny and Stevenson 1999.

⁶³ See Boyd-Barrett 1980, Harris 1981.

⁶⁴ See criticisms in Nwosu et al 1995, Carruthers 2004.

al., 1995). In Africa, a lack of transparency in governments that prefer to keep tight control of their national news agencies following independence presents a challenge to democratising these media organisations (Bourgault, 1995; cf. Carruthers, 2004; Curran & Park, 2000; Kupe, 2007).

Nwosu et al. (1995) are critical of projections on Africa when they point out that “[i]n the developed world’s media, Africa is most often portrayed as a place of a series of coups d’état, corruption, inter-African quarrels, and famine. Africa is described as “hell, poor, war torn, a pit of suffering and despair. . . . The starving child of Somalia . . . has become a symbol of the entire continent” (p. 156). De Beer and Steyn (1996) have further emphasised this as global perceptions fed by the coverage about the continent. Such negative perceptions and the consistent negative presentation of developing nations alongside reports of chronic illnesses and poverty and aid assistance that comes predominantly from Western donors, points to the inability of the developing nations to overcome their situation of dependency and underdevelopment.

Nwosu et al. (1995) maintain that in light of an overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Africa and of the need to either defend or redress Africa’s image in news reports, the idea for a Pan African continental news agency was born. They say:

Generally regarded as the voice of Africa, the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) was a response by the African countries against western news agencies like the Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters, and Agence-France Presse (AFP), which Africans accused of maintaining a monopoly over the flow of international news, and projecting a negative image of the continent. (p. 156)

However, in Africa, PANA has not managed to secure global status, and its news is still largely based on an exchange network among African national news agencies that are owned by the governments. South Africa’s national news agency, SAPA, presents an exception in Africa. It has never been a state owned news agency because its owners are the independent newspapers. However, unlike most of Africa’s

national news agencies, SAPA has been isolated from the rest of the continent under the apartheid system. It was only in the mid-1990s that the agency sought to expand its ties, or news exchange relationship, with other African countries' news agencies. Kumar (2004) states that "developmental" and "nationalist" paradigms have tended to frame developing nations' media.

The chapter discussed a current trend in theorising media in society. It focused on the integrated approach from Schudson, Mosco, and Golding and Murdock. The theoretical framing of the study from a critical political economy perspective, offers a neo-Marxist perspective on global news flows, the changing news environment and the relationships among news agencies.