

Information Imbalance: A Case Study of Print Media in India

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Abstract- The fundamental concerns of imbalances in information and communication had been discussed for a longtime globally. The American media scholar Wilbur Schramm (1964) stated that the flow of news among nations is thin, that much attention is given to developed countries and little to less-developed ones, that important events are ignored and reality is distorted. After a long discussion and debate over media representations of the developing world in UNESCO in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new term was coined as ‘the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO or NWIO).’ The term was widely used by the MacBride Commission, which was charged with creation of a set of recommendations to make global media representation more equitable.

But after three decades from the publication of the MacBride Commission’s report *Many Voices, One World* (1984), the situation has not changed in the information flow from developed to developing nations. This research paper has only one objective to explore the predominance of Foreign News Agencies in Indian Print Media at various levels. This study is basically a content analysis of nine Indian newspapers and periodicals, which were selected on the regional and national basis only for three days.

Index Terms- International news flow, news agency, Indian media, free flow of communication, New World Information and Communication Order

I. INTRODUCTION

In equilibrium in the flow of information is the delicate concern for the world information scenario. What we know and how we know are the key factors. Adverse selection, moral hazard and information monopoly create the information imbalance. After World War-II, the democratic dicta – ‘free flow of information’ was badly challenged. It proved the western dominance in the information dissemination process throughout the world. The end of colonization still could not end the hierarchical structure of one way news flow from developed to developing countries. Traditional dependency on the west based news agencies strangleholds the reasons of imbalanced communication procedure like scarcity of infrastructure, economy, manpower, training, and scope of knowledge sharing.

It results inconceivable competition for third world countries with that of developed countries.

The media is the mirror of the power structure of society. News reporting on the developing world that reflects the priorities of news agencies in London, Paris and New York. Reporting of natural disasters and military coups are preferred rather than the fundamental realities. At the time four major news agencies controlled over 80% of global news flow (New World Information and Communication Order, nd). A few news-networks emphasize capitalism, on the other hand a few use to try to convince the world to see according to their views which manifests the complete, unconditional dependency in news flow. Those imperialist transnational communication dissemination organizations not only deform the fact that to be communicated, but also mostly ignore the common interest of the developing countries. To get rid of the situation and struggle against the imbalance of information, Mac Bride commission suggested a few neutral paths to be adopted by the various media throughout the world. The commission aimed to analyze communication problems in modern societies, particularly relating to mass media and news, consider the emergence of new technologies. The commission called for democratization of communication and strengthening of national media to avoid dependence on external sources, among others. New World Information and Communication Order was formed to diminish these problems to further peace and human development (MacBride report, 1984). NWICO grew out of the New International Economic Order of 1974.

II. OBJECTIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective:

This research paper has only one objective, which is to investigate the predominance of Foreign News Agencies (at the time of propagating international news) in Indian Print Media at various level (regional, national) after 40 years of Mac Bride Commission.

Research Methodology:

The researchers adopted only content analysis. Three regional newspapers were selected based on circulation in the Hindi speaking belt, Bengali speaking region and multilingual north eastern region of the country. Ananda Bazar Patrika- the highest circulated Bengali newspaper, Dainik Jagaran- the leading Hindi newspaper and the leading English newspaper of the north easter part of the country- The Assam Tribune were

chosen for the date of March 06, 2014. As the researchers cannot read any language from South or any other part of the country, therefore the selection of the regional newspapers were done accordingly. Three national English newspapers were selected based on the circulation for the date of March 07, 2014- Times of India, Hindustan Times and The Hindu. Apart from these newspapers, three leading magazines namely India Today, The Week, Outlook were selected for the date of March 08, 2014.

III. ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

The study is basically on nine Indian newspapers and periodicals, which were selected on the regional and national basis for only three days. The analysis is based on the quantitative content analysis.

A. News Agencies in Asia

Before going to discuss on the content analysis, it is necessary to have a look on the various news agencies working in Asia and more particularly in India. Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) is an association of news agencies from UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). It provides a news wire service containing articles donated by its members. There are several news agencies working in this region. Among them the prominent are- Bakhtar News Agency (Afghanistan), Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency (Azerbaijan), Trend News Agency (Azerbaijan), Bahrain News Agency (Bahrain), Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (Bangladesh), United News of Bangladesh (Bangladesh), Agence Khmer de Presse (Cambodia), Xinhua News Agency (China), Korean Central News Agency (North Korea), Emirates News Agency (Emirates), Press Trust of India (India), Asian News International (India), United News of India (India), Indo-Asian News Service (India), Antara (Indonesia), Islamic Republic News Agency (Iran), Mehr News Agency (Iran), Fars News Agency (Iran), National Iraqi News Agency (Iraq), Jiji Press (Japan), Kyodo News (Japan), Kazinform (Kazakhstan), Khabar Agency (Kazakhstan), Kuwait News Agency (Kuwait), Kabar (Kyrgyzstan), Lao News Agency (Laos), Bernama (Malaysia), Montsame News Agency (Mongolia), Rastriya Samachar Samati (Nepal), Oman News Agency (Oman), Pakistan Press International (Pakistan), Associated Press of Pakistan (Pakistan), Philippines News Agency (Philippines), Qatar News Agency (Qatar), Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), ITAR-TASS News Agency (Russia), Russian Information Agency (Russia), Saudi Press Agency (Saudi Arabia), Lankapuvath (Sri Lanka), Syrian Arab News Agency (Syria), Thai News Agency (Thailand), Anadolu News Agency (Turkey), Vietnam News Agency (Vietnam), Yemen News Agency (Yemen).

But the content analysis shows less involvement of Asia based news agencies especially in the Indian print media in covering international news.

B. Content Analysis

March 06, 2014 was the date selected to analyse the content in the regional newspapers. It is already mentioned that Ananda Bazar Patrika was chosen from East. It is a Bengali

newspaper having about 5.5 million circulations. On the specific date, six international news were covered by the newspaper. But interestingly every news was taken from the news agencies based in Peiyongyoung, Kiev, Ukraine and Vatican. But there is no mention of the name of the news agency as well as from where it is reported. Only 'Sambad Sanstha' (News Agency) is mentioned at the credit line portion.

The same can be seen in Dainik Jagaran. The names of news agencies are not mentioned in the newspaper, but the place from where it is being reported is mentioned in the portion of international news. Most of the stories are reported from London, Beijing, Ukraine, Bangkok, Huston, Los Angeles, New York, Bagdad and Washington. Dainik Jagaran is a Hindi Language Daily having 15.5 million circulations.

On the other hand, The Assam Tribune contains good number of international news than that of others. Most of the news are accompanied by the name of the news agency as well as the place from where the news was reported. The information provided by PTI and AFP gets preference. The news have been reported from the places like London, Melbourne, Jakarta, Hong Kong etc.

The analysis depicts the fact that though the news from other developing countries are very significant and delicate in nature but the news from the developed countries get more preference than that of others. It seems that though we get international news from developing countries, but we can see the angels of those news as the news providers want depending on the political point of view and international relations.

C. News Flow in the Selected National Newspapers

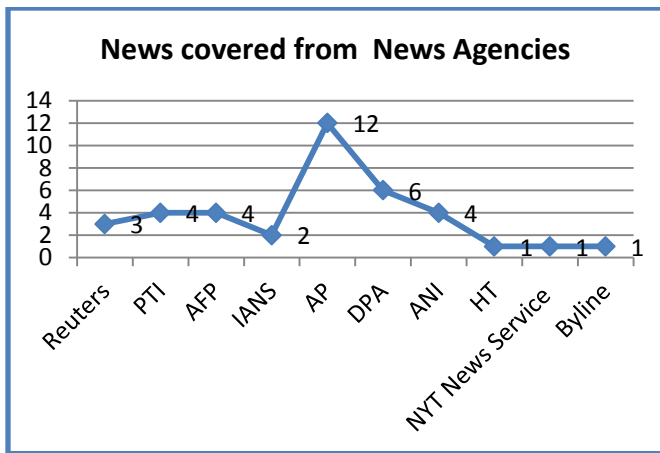
The Times of India owned by Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd is an English newspaper with 7.2 million circulations. On March 07, 2014, the news stories were provided by Reuters, PTI, AFP, IANS, Edward Wong, NYT News Service from various places like Washington, Kiev, Los Angeles etc. All the international news were published with by line.

Whereas the Hindustan Times published various news stories provided by Reuters, Associated Press, AFP, PTI, Asian News International from various places like Simferopol, Washington, Tripoli, Paris, Boston, London, Vatican City etc. On that day two letters –one from Yashwant Raj and one from Noopur Tiwari can be found carrying international news content. The Hindustan Times is owned by HT Media Ltd. It is an English newspaper having 4.3 million circulations.

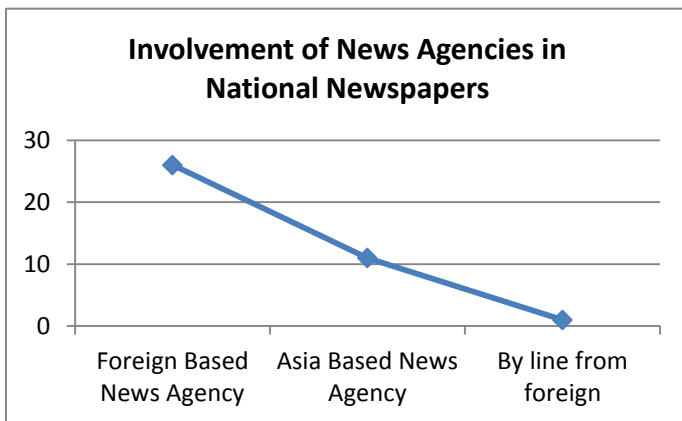
The Hindu owned by Kasturi & Sons Ltd. is having 1.47 million circulations. On the particular date, this English daily was provided various international news stories from AP, DPA, PTI from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Damascus, Syria, Brisbane, Australia, Ankara, Turkey, Ramallah, West Bank, Beirut, The Hague, Kuala Lumpur, Eijing, Tokyo, Caracas, Auckland, Los Angeles, Washington and Brussels.

**D. Involvement of News Contents in National Newspapers
 (For International News)**

The analysis shows that in three national newspapers, there three news covered from Reuters, whereas four news were taken from PTI, four from Agence France-Presse, two from Indo-Asian News Service, twelve from Associated Press, six from Deutsche Presse-Agentur, four from Asian News International, one from own source (HT), one from Edward Wong, NYT News Service, and one By line.



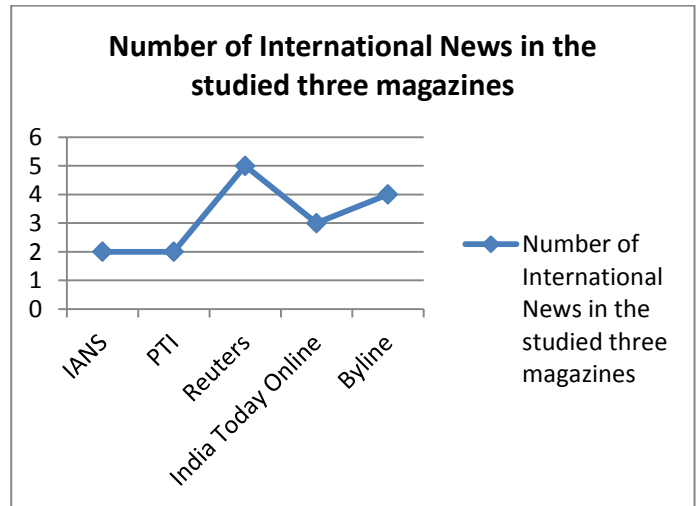
The analysis shows that 26 news covered in these three national newspapers on the particular day from the News agencies based in western and developed countries. Less than one third news (11) were covered from the Asian news agencies and only one from the foreign correspondent. The data gives a vivid picture of the foreign interruption in the international flow of information in the developing countries like India.



E. Magazine:

Most Indian publications are publicly secretive about their circulation numbers. But four news magazines are popular in the national level as 'Big-4' including the Week, Outlook, Frontline and India Today. All these are English news magazines (Magazine, nd).

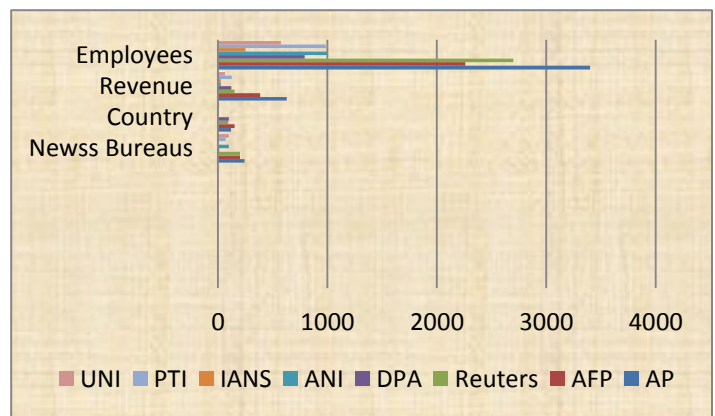
The research shows that in case of major magazines in India, the information on international issues is taken from the news agencies based in developed countries. Here it can be seen that in total three magazines two news came from IANS, two from PTI, five from Reuters, three from own sources and four bylines from abroad. It is clearly seen the dominance of the western news agencies.



F. Reasons

In this small analysis, the fact says that Asia based news agencies are less preferred in Indian print media. We have to take into the consideration of various factors for the less preference of these news agencies like maintaining balance between revenue generation and cost of subscription of the news agencies, number of countries (as subscribers), number of news bureaus and of course the correspondents' employment structure.

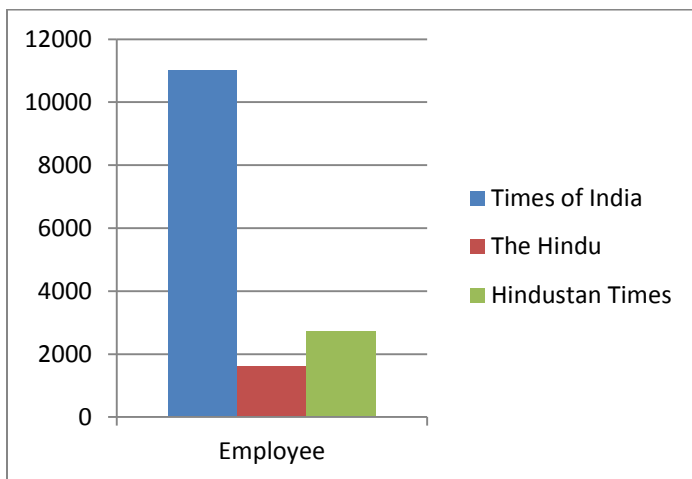
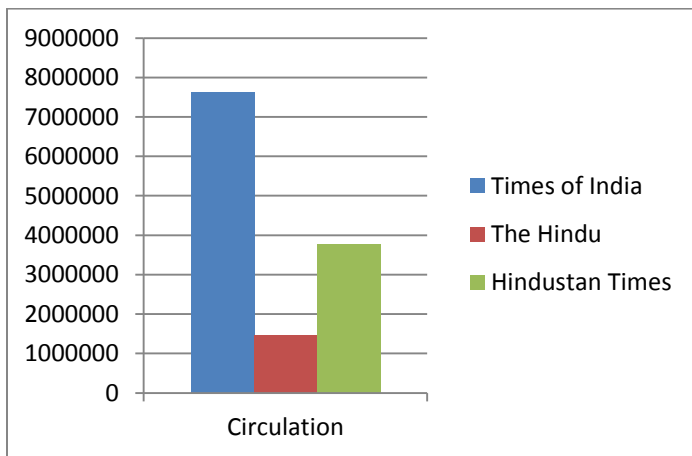
Basic structure of the news agencies



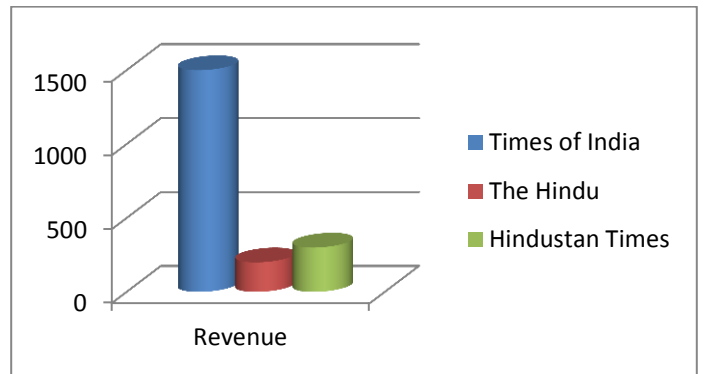
The chart is depicting the data that in competition of Asia based news agencies cannot stand anyway. Associated Press not only has the highest employee structure but also in terms of revenue, number of news bureaus. On the other hand AFP is the

highest in rank in number of countries covered. In India, UNI is in the lowest rank in every sector. But the condition and status of PTI is quite satisfactory.

Now the question comes that- why the media of India are dependent upon the western news agencies for international news? One of the answers could be like this- lack of infrastructure and constrain in affordability. For regional level print media, to some extent is quite valid consideration and in ignorable cause to sustain and give coverage of international news to the local people. But in case of national newspapers these reasons cannot be applicable. The graph below is depicting the fact.



According to 2011 data, Times of India has an yearly turnover of US \$ 1.5 billion, whereas in 2010 the yearly income of The Hindu was \$200 million, and the Hindustan Times had US\$300 million (according to 2011 report) yearly turn over. In terms of employee structure and circulation of three of them have satisfactory output.



IV. CONCLUSION

As we know after the cold war, colonization of news flow was clearly emerged. That time it was felt that the information dissemination process has become one sided and purely one way of communication. But after 1970's this trend was not accepted by various countries and Non Alignment Movement came into existence. In parallel way, Mac Bride Commission, NWICO were also formed to control over the dominance of a few powerful countries in free flow of information throughout the world. Over the time especially in India, the media scenario has changed its phenomenon. In the 90's, not only the number of newspapers increased but also various private satellite channels have started to capture the media market in a wide range since 2000.

But unfortunately the dependency on foreign source and news network was not at all abolished. The common mass is unknowingly digesting all the international information as they (the dominant providers) want. People are compelled to think about Ukraine as America or Europe aspires. We see Pakistan as they make the common people seen. On the contrary except a few big stories, the developing countries are hardly represented as international issues. The foreign based news agencies like Reuters, AFP, DPA, AP have huge worldwide network, and of course for which the revenue becomes so huge that they can afford the staff or stringers in every required place, whereas Asia based news agencies have less number of subscribers and that is the reason that they are unable to put the representation in every required field. On the other hand the big media organizations (though they can afford) are less concerned about the view and intention of news rather they are more intend to concentrate the international issues and the increasing number of news.

The Press Trust of India has a place of satisfactory coverage, The media organizations should try to strengthen the activities of news network of Asia. More subscribers more revenue more representation of the required field are needed. Not only Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) will work properly but also Association of News agencies of Asia should be formed to checklist of the foreign interference especially in case of international issues. On the other hand the Government should have regulation on the using of international information in national or regional media. There should be a strong policy to gate keep the one way of communication. It should instigate the

free flow of information. Otherwise, not only the confusion among third world countries but also between developed and developing countries will be increased without having any solution.

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