

International Communication: A Critical Reflection of the Major Turning Points in History

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Abstract

International communication was in existence since ancient days. During historical time empires, the emperors used different forms of communicating to their subject people or regions such as runners, written scripts, horn-link or drum-link (horn blowers or drummers positioned in hilly places across a region) and other forms. This paper therefore seeks to trace the historical development of international communication by critically analysing the existing literature. With development of technology, communication has changed certainly from the early – twentieth century days of one-way, one directional and undifferentiated flow to an undifferentiated mass. There is rise of a new communication society characterized by complex interactive network of communication. Currently we have countless forms of communication. World intelligence issues, state to state diplomacy, agreements and secret issues, world business, the need for both cultural and social exchange both at national and individual levels, social interaction, education exchange and others have been eased by the present day technological advancements such as; modern cinema, emailing, satellite broadcasting, internet information exchange, cable networks and other cross-generic or hybrid cyber-pinking. This paper foregrounds the argument that international communication is important to note that they are specific to the type of communication or media systems. Depending with ideologies and regional or continental sources, different media systems have different characteristics. For instance, western communication systems are different from Middle East or third world communication systems.

Keywords: International communication, Telegraph, Radio, internet

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Definition

Thussu (2006) Defines International Communication as the sharing of knowledge, ideas and beliefs among the various people of the world, and therefore can be a contributing factor in resolving global conflict and promoting mutual understanding among nations. He further notes that the channels of international communication have been used in the past not for lofty deals but to promote the economic and political interest of the world's powerful Nation who control the means of global communication.

2.0 A REFLECTION OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Power over distance has actually been exercised and maintained in the past through communication. From the Persian Greek and roman empires to the British, efficient network of communication was essential to the imposition of the imperial authority as well as for the international trade and commerce on which they were based (Thussu, 2006). The efficiency of communication network was judged by the size of the empire.

Diodorus Cronus a Greek historian recounts how king Darius(522-486BC) was able to extend the Persian empire from the Danube to the Indus by sending news from the capital to the provinces by means of a line of shouting men positioned on heights. This kind of transmission was 30 times faster than using runners.

Julius Caesar (100-44BC) reports that the Gauls, using the human voice, could call all the warriors to war in just three days using fire at night and smoke mirrors during the day is mentioned in ancient texts, from the old testament to Homer.

Writing became a more flexible and efficient way of conveying information over long distances. In Rome, Persia and the great Khan of china writing was utilized. This was made possible by the creation of wide-ranging official postal and dispatches systems' (Lewis, 1996:152). Lewis further points out that *Acta Diurna* which was founded by Julius Caesar and one of the forerunners of modern news media was distributed across one of the Roman empires: 'as communication became more efficient the possibility of control from the center became greater'.

In India, Emperor Ashoka edicts inscribed on a rock in the third century BC, are found across south Asia, from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka and writ writers had a prominent place in the royal household. During mughal period Indian history, news writers were employed by the kings to appraise them in progress in the empire. Both horsemen and dispatch runners transmitted news and reports

In China, the T' ang dynasty(618-907) created a formal handwritten publication, the *tia-pao* or 'official newspapers', which disseminated information to the elite, and in the Ching period(1644-1911) private news bureau sprang up which composed and circulated official news in the printed form known as *ch'ing pao* (smith, 1979)

Informally, there existed networks of travelers and traders. Trade and cultural interchanges existed for

more than two millennia between Graeco-Roman world and Arabia, India and China. Indian merchandise was exported to the Persian Gulf and the overland through Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean coast, and from there onwards to Western Europe. Trans Asian trade flourished in ancient times, linking China with India and the Arabic lands. Through this, information and ideas were communicated across continents, as shown by the spread of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

The means of communication was transformed in the fifteenth century by Johann Gutenberg, a Gold smith in Mainz Germany, who developed a movable type printing press. From the clay tablet in Mesopotamia, papyrus roll in ancient Egypt and in ancient Greece, to parchment codex in the Roman Empire a new chapter was opened by Gutenberg. By the eighteenth century, paper introduced from china began to replace parchment in the Islamic world and spread to medieval Europe. Also from china, printing slowly diffused to Europe, aided by Moors' occupation of Spain.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the printing press was printing thousands of books in all major European languages. Christianity was given a big boost because the holy scriptures were available in other languages other than Latin, undermining the authority of priests, scribes and political and cultural elites. As a consequence the Latin culture was dissolved by the rise of vernacular languages which was consolidated by the printing press (Febvre and Martin, 1990:332)

Following the translations of the bible by John Wycliffe in England and Martin Luther in Germany, the printing revolution was helped to lay the basis for the reformation and the foundations of nations state and of modern capitalism (Eisenstein, 1979)

New languages, especially Portuguese, Spanish, English and French, became the main vehicles of communication for the European colonial powers in many parts of the world. This transplantation of communication systems around the globe created a new hierarchy of language and territories (smith,1980)

The Portuguese empire was one of the first to grasp the importance of the medium for colonial consolidation, with the kings of Portugal sending books in the cargoes of ships carrying explorers. They opened printing presses in the territories they occupied-the first in Genoa in 1557 and in Macao in 1588. Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama (1460-1524) discovered an ocean route from Portugal to East Africa.

The industrial revolution in Western Europe was founded on the growing commerce as a result of the colonization. Britain's domination of the sea routes was to a large extent due to the pre-eminence of the of its navy and merchant fleet, as a result of a pioneering work in the mapping out of several charts by the great eighteenth century explorers such as James Cook, enabled also the by the determination of longitude based on the Green which meridian. Technological advances such as the development of the iron ship, steam engine and the electric telegraph a all helped to keep Britain ahead of its rivals.(Thussu,2006;3)

Postal reforms in England were initialed in 1840 by Anthony Trollope as a Postmaster General, with the adoption of single-rate, one penny postage stamp, irrespective of distance, revolutionized postal systems. This was followed by the establishment of the universal postal union in 1875 in Berne, under the universal postal Convention of 1874, created to harmonize international postal rates and to recognize the secrecy of correspondence. Therefore, innovations in transport of railways and steamships, international links were being established the accelerated the growth of European trade and colonial empires.

3.0 TELEGRAPH TECHNOLOGY

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an expanding systems of imperial communications made possible by the electric telegraph.(Thussu,2006;3). Invented by Samuel Morse in 1837, the telegraph enabled the rapid transmission of information as well as ensuring secrecy and code protection. The business community was the first to utilize this new technology. The speed of and reliability of telegraphy were seen to offer opportunities for profit and international expansion (Hugill, 1999)

The rapid development of the telegraph was a crucial feature in the unification of the British Empire. With the first commercial telegraph link set up in Britain in 1838,by 1851 a public telegraph service ,including telegraphic money order system had been introduced. By the end of the century, as a result of the cable connections, the telegraph allowed the colonial office and the India office to communicate directly with the empire within minutes when previously it had taken months for post to come via sea. (Thussu, 2006;3)



(SOURCE:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1901_Eastern_Telegraph_cables.png)

Telegraph was mainly used to relay timely prices for commodities like cotton. It enabled British Merchants, exporting cotton from India or Egypt to England, to beat their competitors easily.

The telegraph was also used by the military. The overhead telegraph installed in Algeria in 1842(Mattelart,1994). During the carimean war(1854-56),the rival imperial powers, Britain and France, trying to prevent westward Russian expansion t(Thussu,2006;3)hat threatened over overland routes to their colonial territories in Asia, exchanged Military Intelligence through the underwater cable in the in the black sea laid by the British during the conflict. The Caremean conflict was also notable for the pioneering war reports of Irishman William Howard Russell in the Times of London who was to become the first' big name' in international journalism. During the Civil war in America (1861-65), over 24000 kilometers of cable was laid to send more than 6.5 million telegrams. This civil war in USA was a good example of co-operative news gathering among the American and European Journalists, and the use of photojournalism.

The first underwater telegraphic cable which linked Britain and France became operational in 1851 and the first transatlantic cable, connecting Britain and the USA, in 1866. Between 1851 and 1868, underwater networks were laid down across The North Atlantic, the meditarrean, the Indian ocean and the Persian Gulf. (Thussu, 2006; 3)

During the 1860s and 1870s London was linked up by a cable to the key areas of the empire. The first line between Europe and India via Turkey was opened in 1865. Two other cable to India-one overland across Russia and other undersea via Alexandria and Aden-were started in Hong-Kong in 1871 and to Australia in 1872,and Shanghai and Tokyo were linked by 1873(Read,1992)

By the 1870s, telegraph lines were operating within most countries in Asia and an international communication network dominated by Britain was beginning to emerge. The expansion of cable was marked by the rivalry between the British and French empires, which intensified after 1869, with the opening of the Suez Canal.

4.0 THE ERA OF NEWS AGENCIES

Newspapers played a very crucial role in the development of telegraph networks, this was because of the demand for news, especially the information required to conduct international commerce (Thussu, 2006). Establishment of news agencies across the world was the most development in the newspaper industry of the 19th century, shaping the process of news dissemination at the national and international level. Business people required commercial information on businesses, stocks, currencies, commodities and harvests. Through this, news agencies grew in power and reach (Boyd-barett & Rantanen, 1998)

	COUNTRY	AGENCY	YEAR FOUNDED
1	Germany	Wolff	1849
2	France	Havas Agency	1835
3	Britain	Reuters	1851
4	USA	Associated Press (AP) United Press (UP)	1848 1907

(SOURCE: THUSSU, D.K. 2006)

The Havas, Wolff and Reuters all of which were subsidized by their governments, controlled information market in Europe and were looking beyond the continent to expand their operations. In 1870, the three agencies signed a treaty to divide up the world market. The resulting alliance was commonly referred as the 'ring combination'. This was a 'cartel' in the field of information dissemination

The 1870 treaty reserved some territories for the three agencies. Each agency made its own separate contracts with national agencies or other subscribers within its own territory. Some provisions were made for some few 'shared' territories in which two or sometimes all three agencies had equal rights.

4.1 The Film

The internationalization of a new mass culture began with the film industry. The first screening was in 1895, films were being seen a year from Bombay to Buenos Aires.

Pathe which was found in 1907 in France was dominating the European market. Its distribution bureaux were located in seven European countries as well as in Turkey, the USA and Brazil.

Between 1909 and 1913, Hollywood film industry was developed which was to later dominate global film production. In the music realm, the dog and the trumpet logo of his masters voice' (HMV), label the gramophone company, became a global image. All these led to the Anglo American Domination of the international recording industry that lasted throughout the twentieth century and up to date.

Advertising by the end of the nineteenth century, US based advertising companies were looking beyond the domestic market. J. Walter Thomson for example, established a sales bureau in London in 1899. It is in the USA that advertising was given its modern form, making the world most consumerist society. The total expenditure on advertising in the USA rose from \$0.45 billion at the start of the century to \$212 billion by its end (Thussu, 2006)

In the twentieth century, advertising became increasingly popular in international communication. From the 1901 advertisement for the record label His Masters Voice to De Beers hugely popular campaign 'A diamond is forever' put out in 1948. Advertising was starting to target international audiences. This became even stronger with the growth of Radio and Tv. Coca Cola 1970 'it's the real thing' and 1988, Nike's slogan 'just do it' came up and was consumed across the world

5.0 THE ERA OF RADIO

The first radio transmission was in 1902. Unlike telegraphs cables, radio equipment was cheap and could be sold on large scale. There was also awareness by the Americans that radio if properly developed and controlled, might be used to undercut the huge advantages of the British dominated cable links (Luther 1988)

In 1906, the 28 states debated radio equipment standards and procedures in the radio telegraph conference in Berlin. The great naval powers, who were also major users of radio (Britain, Germany, France-the USA and Russia) had imposed a regime of radio frequency allocation allowing priority to the country that first notified the international Telegraph union of its intention to use a specific radio frequency

Two distinct types of national radio broadcasting emerged: in the USA, the radio Act of 1927 confirmed its status as a commercial enterprise, funded by advertising, while the BBC founded in 1927 as a non profit public broadcasting monopoly, provided a model for other European and developing countries

Radio brought about a battle by countries that had the financial muscle for the airwaves. The radio was used for propaganda was an integral part of its development, with its power to influence values, beliefs and attitudes.

During the first world war the power of radio was quickly recognized as vital both to the public management of public opinion at home and propaganda abroad, directed at allies and enemies alike- Laswell, a well known writer on propaganda notes that "During the war period it came to be recognized that the

mobilization of men and means was not sufficient, there must be mobilization of opinion. Power over opinion, as over life and property, passed into official hands.” (Laswell, 1927:14)

The Russian communist were one of the earliest political groups to realize the ideological and strategic importance of broadcasting (Thussu, 2006). The first public broadcast to be recorded in history of wireless propaganda was by the council of the people coming of Lenin historic message on 30th October 1917. The all-Russian congress of the sonnet has formed a new soviet government. The government of the Kerensky has been overthrown and arrested. Kerensky are in the hands of the soviet government (quoted in Hale, 1975:16)

6.0 THE INTERNET ORDER

It is a short form of the word Inter-Network. Its history can be traced back to the year 1968, where the USA department of defense Advanced Research Projects agency Network(APRANET) created a communication network linking top defense branches of its administration. This was divided into Military and civilian sections with the latter giving rise to the internet. The establishment of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1989 brought about an explosion in the field of international communication and technology

If trains and ships facilitated the movements of manufactured products from one part of the world to another, fiber optics, satellites and the internet have enabled the trade of information instantly across the globe. From the telegraph to the telephone, radio to television, computers and now

7.0 CONCLUSION

The convergence of telecommunication and computing and the ability to move all data revolutionized has international exchange. The digitization of images texts and sounds has increased exponentially the speed and volume of data transmission compared with analogue systems. The introduction of digital communication was closely linked to the availability of new fiber optic cable for telephones and Television. Therefore, as technology advances we are yet to witness a variety of new formats offering speeds unmatched by the previous advancements.

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