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The historical context of international communication

The study of contemporary international communication can be illuminated by an understanding of the elements of continuity and change in its development. The nexus of economic, military and political power has always depended on efficient systems of communication, from flags, beacon fires and runners, to ships and telegraph wires, and now satellites. The evolution of telegraphic communication and empire in the nineteenth century exemplifies these interrelationships, which continued throughout the twentieth century, even after the end of empire. During the two World Wars and the Cold War, the power and significance of the new media – radio and then television – for international communication were demonstrated by their use for international propaganda as well as recognizing their potential for socio-economic development.

Communication and empire

Communication has always been critical to the establishment and maintenance of power over distance. From the Persian, Greek and Roman empires to the British, efficient networks of communication were essential for the imposition of imperial authority, as well as for the international trade and commerce on which they were based. Indeed, the extent of empire could be used as an 'indication of the efficiency of communication' (Innis, [1950] 1972: 9). Communications networks and technologies were key to the mechanics of distributed government, military campaigns and trade.

The Greek historian, Diodorus Cronus (4th century BC) recounts how the Persian king, Darius I (522–486 BC), who extended the Persian Empire from the Danube to the Indus, could send 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. In *De Bello Gallico*,

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

While many rulers, including the Greek polis, used inscription for public information, writing became a more flexible and efficient means of conveying information over long distances: 'Rome, Persia and the Great Khan of China all utilised writing in systems of information-gathering and dispersal, creating wide-ranging official postal and dispatch systems' (Lewis, 1996: 152). It is said that the *Acta Diurna*, founded by Julius Caesar and one of the forerunners of modern news media, was distributed across most of the Roman Empire: 'as communication became more efficient, the possibility of control from the centre became greater' (Lewis, 1996: 156).

The Indian Emperor Ashoka's edicts, inscribed on 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 the Mughal period in Indian history, the *waqi'a-nawis* (newswriters) were employed by the kings to appraise them of the progress in the empire. Both horsemen and despatch runners transmitted news and reports. In China, the T'ang Dynasty (618–907) created a formal hand-written publication, the *ti pao* or 'official newspaper' which disseminated information to the elite and in the Ching Period (1644–1911) private news bureaux sprang up which composed and circulated official news in the printed form known as the *Ch'ing pao* (Smith, 1979).

In addition to official systems of communication, there have also always been informal networks of travellers and traders. The technologies of international communication and globalization may be contemporary phenomena but trade and cultural interchanges have existed for more than two millennia between the Graeco-Roman world with Arabia, India and China. Indian merchandise was exported to the Persian Gulf and then overland, through Mesopotamia, to the Mediterranean coast, and from there onwards to Western Europe. An extensive trans-Asian trade flourished in ancient times, linking China with India and the Arabic lands. Later, the Silk Route through central Asia linked China, India and Persia with Europe. Information and ideas were communicated across continents, as shown by the spread of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

The medium of communication developed from the clay tablet of Mesopotamia, the papyrus roll in ancient Egypt and in ancient Greece, to parchment codex in the Roman empire. By the eighth 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 the Moors' occupation of Spain, but it was not until the fifteenth century, with the movable type printing press developed by Johann Gutenberg, a goldsmith in Mainz in Germany, that the means of communication were transformed.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the printing presses were turning out thousands of copies of books in all the major European languages. For the first time the Scriptures were available in a language other than Latin, undermining the authority of priests, scribes and political and cultural elites. As a consequence, 'the unified Latin culture of Europe was finally dissolved by the rise of the vernacular languages which was consolidated by the printing press' (Febvre and Martin, 1990: 332). Coupled with vernacular translations of the Bible by John Wycliffe in England and Martin Luther in Germany, the printing revolution helped to lay the basis for the Reformation and the foundations of nation-state and of modern capitalism (Tawney, 1937; Eisenstein, 1979).

The new languages, especially Portuguese, Spanish, English and French, became the main vehicle of communication for the European colonial powers in many parts of the world. This transplantation of communication systems around the globe resulted in the undermining of local languages and cultures of the conquered territories. 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 printing press was opened in Goa in 1557 and in Macao in 1588. Other European powers also used the new technology and the printed book played an important role in the colonization of Asia. European languages – especially Portuguese, Spanish, English and French – became the main vehicle of communication for the colonial powers in many parts of the world. This transplantation of communication systems around the globe created a new hierarchy of language and culture in the conquered territories (Smith, 1980).

The Industrial Revolution in Western Europe, founded on the profits of the growing international commerce encouraged by colonization, gave a huge stimulus to the internationalization of communication. Britain's domination of the sea routes of international commerce was to a large extent due to the pre-eminence of its navy and merchant fleet, a result of pioneering work in the mapping out of naval charts by the great eighteenth-century explorers, such as James Cook, enabled also by the determination of longitude based on the Greenwich Meridian. Technological advances such as the development of the iron ship, the steam engine and the electric telegraph all helped to keep Britain ahead of its rivals.

The growth of international trade and investment required a constant source of reliable data about international trade and economic affairs, while the Empire required a constant supply of information essential for maintaining political alliances and military security. Waves of emigration as a result of industrialization and empire helped to create a popular demand for news from relatives at home and abroad, and a general climate of international awareness (Smith, 1980).

The postal reform in England in 1840, initiated by the well-known author, Anthony Trollope as Post-Master General, with the adoption of a

single-rate, one penny postage stamp (the Penny Black), 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 principle of respect for the secrecy of correspondence. With the innovations in transport of railways and steamships, international links were being established that accelerated the growth of European trade and consolidated colonial empires.

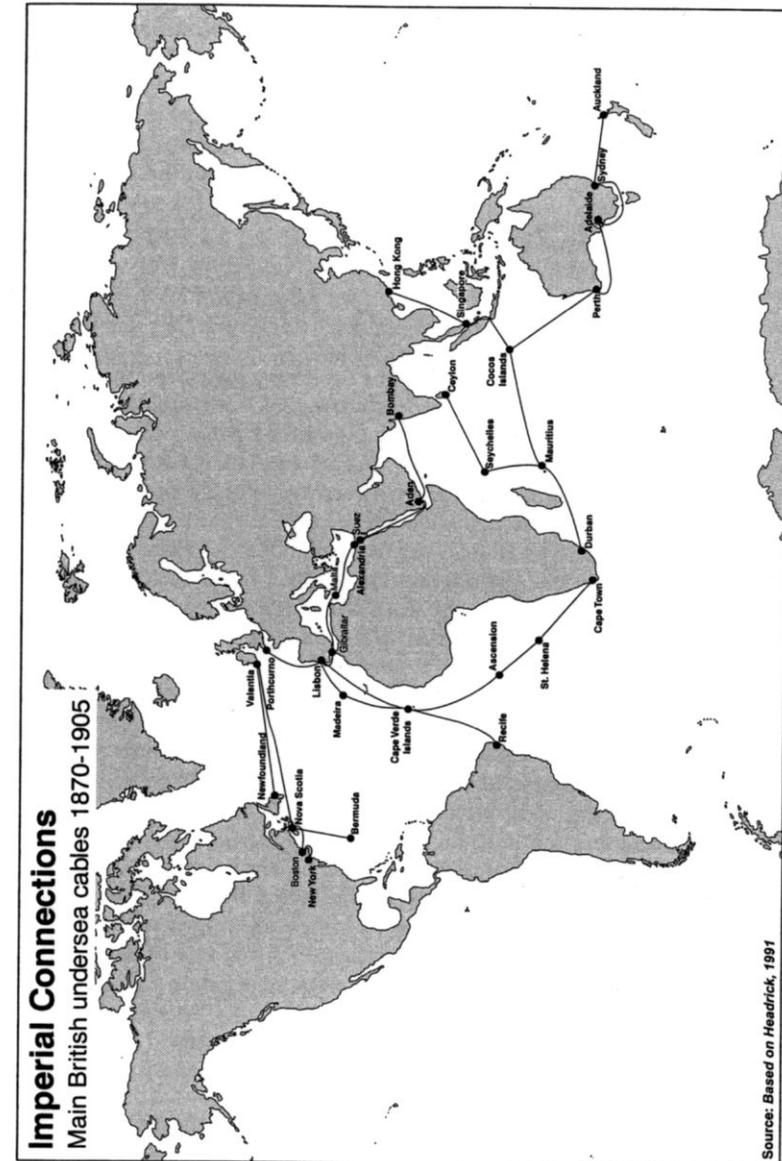
The growth of the telegraph

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an expanding system of imperial communications made possible by the electric telegraph. 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 first to make use of this new technology. The speed and reliability of telegraphy were seen to offer opportunities for profit and international expansion (Headrick, 1991).

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 a 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. By providing spot prices for commodities like cotton, the telegraph enabled British merchants, exporting cotton from India or Egypt to England, to easily beat their competitors (Read, 1992).

The new technology also had significant military implications. The overhead telegraph, installed in Algeria in 1842, proved a decisive aid to the French during the occupation and colonization of Algeria (Mattelart, 1994). During the Crimean War (1854–56), the rival imperial powers, Britain and France, trying to prevent Russian westward expansion that threatened overland routes to their colonial territories in Asia, exchanged military intelligence through an underwater cable in the Black Sea laid by the British during the conflict. (The Crimean conflict was notable for the pioneer war reports of Irishman William Howard Russell in *The Times* of London, who was to become the first 'big name' in international journalism.)

Similarly, during the Civil War in the US (1861–65) over 24 000 kilometres of cable was laid to send more than 6.5 million telegrams. The American Civil War was not only one of the earliest conflicts to be extensively reported, but also the first example both of co-operative news gathering among the American and European journalists, and of the use of photo-journalism.



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 Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf. During the 1860s and 1870s, London was linked up by cable to the key areas of the Empire (*see map, p.15*). The first line between Europe and India via Turkey was opened in 1865. Two other cables to India – one overland across Russia and the other undersea via Alexandria and Aden were both started in 1870. India was linked to 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 British and French Empires, which intensified after 1869, with the opening of the Suez Canal.

The decade from 1870 to 1880 saw the successive inaugurations of communications links between the English coast and the Dutch East Indies (Batavia), the Caribbean network, the line from the British West Indies to Australia and China, the networks in the China and Japanese seas, the cable from Suez to Aden, communication between Aden and British India, the New Zealand cables, communication between the east and south coasts of Africa, and the cable from Hong Kong to Manila (Read, 1992).

In South America, the south transatlantic cable, opened in 1874, linked Lisbon with Recife, Brazil, via the Cape Verde Islands and Madeira. Two years later, a network was established along the coast of Chile. The British cable of 1874 was joined in 1879 by a new French cable across the North Atlantic, with a spur to Brazil, and by a new German cable from Emden to the Azores to Moravia on the African coast, and from there to Recife. By 1881, a network along the pacific coast from Mexico to Peru was in operation. In the 1880s, France established a series of links along the coast of Indochina and Africa, with networks in Senegal (Desmond, 1978).

The British-sponsored Indo-European landline telegraph between India and the Prussian North Sea coast had gone into operation in 1865. The cable had been extended from British shores to Alexandria by 1869, to Bombay in 1870, and other cables had been extended from Madras to Ceylon and from Singapore to Australia and New Zealand by 1873, and also to Hong Kong, Shanghai and the Japanese coast. Connections were made in China in 1896 with a spur of the Great Northern Telegraph Company Danish-owned line across Siberia to Russia and other points in Europe. This made a Tokyo–Shanghai–St Petersburg–London communications link possible (Desmond, 1978).

Undersea cables required huge capital investment, which was met by colonial authorities and by banks, businessmen and the fast-growing newspaper industry, and the cable networks were largely in the hands of the private sector. Of the total cable distance of 104 000 miles, not more than 10

per cent was administered by governments. To regulate the growing internationalization of information, the International Telegraph Union was founded in 1865 with 22 members, all Europeans, except Persia, representing, 'the first international institution of the modern era and the first organisation for the international regulation of a technical network' (Mattelart, 1994: 9).

According to the International Telegraph Union, the number of telegraphic transmissions in the world shot from 29 million in 1868 to 329 million in 1900 (Mattelart, 1994).

For the first time in history, colonial metropolis acquired the means to communicate almost instantly with their remotest colonies ... The world was more deeply transformed in the nineteenth century than in any previous millennium, and among the transformations few had results as dazzling as the network of communication and transportation that arose to link Europe with the rest of the world.

(Headrick, 1981: 129–30)

Military operations – such as the Japanese–Russian war of 1904–5, were both assisted and reported by the first transpacific cable which had been completed in 1902, joint property of the governments of Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Canada. It ran from Vancouver to Sydney and Brisbane, by way of Fanning Island, Suva, and Norfolk Island, with a spur from Norfolk Island to Auckland. A connection already existed, established in 1873, linking Tokyo and London, with spurs to Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Colombo, Calcutta, Bombay, and Alexandria, and with cable and telegraphic spurs by way of Singapore and Batavia to Darwin, Sydney and Auckland, where ties were made to the new transpacific cable to Vancouver.

A second transpacific cable was completed in 1903 by US interests, providing a link between San Francisco and Manila, through Honolulu, to Midway Island and Guam, and from there to the Asian mainland and Japan by existing British cables. All of these landing points were controlled by the United States: the Hawaiian Islands had been a US territory since 1900 and Midway was claimed by it in 1867, while Guam and the Philippines had become US colonies as a result of the 1898 Spanish-American War (Desmond, 1978). Control over cables as well as sea routes was also of enormous strategic importance in an age of imperial rivalry (Kennedy, 1971). The cables were, in the words of Headrick, 'an essential part of the new imperialism' (1981: 163).

The outcomes of the two imperial wars – the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Boer War (1899–1902) – strengthened the European and US positions in the world and led to a rapid expansion in world trade that demanded immediate and vastly improved communications links, as well as more advanced naval capabilities. The new technology of 'wireless' telegraphy (also called radiotelegraphy) promised to meet these needs.

In 1901 Guglielmo Marconi harnessed the new discovery of electromagnetism to make the first wireless transatlantic telegraph transmission, with support from naval armament companies and newspaper groups. The British Empire had a great technological advantage since the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of Great Britain dominated global telegraph traffic and had a virtual monopoly on international telegraph exchanges, as it refused to communicate with any other system other than its own. The operators of a Marconi apparatus were prohibited from responding to radio signals emanating from a non-Marconi transmitter, a policy that had the effect of blocking the exchange of critically important information relating to the safe passage of ships. However, at the Berlin Conference on Wireless Telegraphy in 1906 the first multilateral agreements on radiotelegraphy were signed and the International Radiotelegraph Union was born. By 1907 Marconi's monopoly was being challenged by other European countries as well as the United States.

The dominance of British cable companies, which lasted until the end of the First World War, was based on direct control through ownership, and indirect control by means of diplomatic censorship, which Britain exercised over the messages travelling through its cables. Britain had a critical advantage in its control of the copper and gutta-percha markets – the raw materials for the manufacture of cable – since the world rates of these were fixed in London and British mining companies owned copper deposits and mines in Chile, the world's biggest producer (Read, 1992).

Colonial governments supported the cable companies, either scientifically by research on maps and navigation, or financially by subsidies. In 1904, 22 of the 25 companies that managed international networks were affiliates of British firms; Britain deployed 25 ships totalling 70 000 tons, while the six vessels of the French cable-fleet amounted to only 7 000 tons. As a result, British supremacy over the undersea networks was overwhelming: in 1910, the Empire controlled about half the world total, or 260 000 kilometres. France, which in contrast to the USA and UK, opted for the state administration of cable, controlled no more than 44 000 kilometres (Headrick, 1991; Mattelart, 1994). As Table 1.1 demonstrates, the Anglo-American domination of international communication hardware was well established by the late nineteenth century, with the two countries owning nearly 75 per cent of the world's cables.

Much of the global cabling was done by private companies, with Britain's Eastern Telegraph Company and the US-based Western Union Telegraph Company dominating the cable industry. By 1923, private companies had nearly 75 per cent of the global cabling share, with British accounting for nearly 43 per cent, followed by the American companies which owned 23 per cent (Headrick, 1991). Within a quarter of a century, the world's cable networks had more than doubled in length.

As British companies were losing their share of global cable, the Americans increased their control on international communication channels

Table 1.1 Cabling the world

	1892		1923	
	length (km)	global share (%)	length (km)	global share (%)
British Empire	163 619	66.3	297 802	50.5
United States	38 986	15.8	142 621	24.2
French Empire	21 859	8.9	64 933	11
Denmark	13 201	5.3	15 590	2.6
Others	9 206	3.7	68 282	11.7
All cables combined	246 871	100	589 228	100

Source: Based on data from Headrick (1991)

by leasing cables from British firms. US companies challenged Britain's supremacy in the field of international cables and telegraph traffic, which, they claimed, gave unfair advantage to British trade. The American view was that the pre-war cable system had 'been built in order to connect the old world commercial centres with world business' and that now was the time to develop 'a new system with the United States as a centre' (cited in Luther, 1988: 20).

The cables were the arteries of an international network of information, of intelligence services and of propaganda. Their importance can be gauged from the fact that the day after the First World War broke out, the British cut both German transatlantic cables. After the war, the debates over who should control the cables, which had been taken over early in the war, one by the British and another by the French, dominated discussions at the 1919 peace talks at Versailles and reflected the rivalry between the British cable companies and the growing US radio interests for ownership and control of global communications networks. The USA proposed that the cables be held jointly under international control or trusteeship and that a world congress be convened to consider international aspects of telegraph, cable and radio communication (Luther, 1988).

Unlike cables, the Americans dominated the new technology of telephones. Following the patenting of the telephone by the Bell Telephone Company, established by the inventor of telephony Alexander Graham Bell in 1877, telephone production increased in the US. In 1885, American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T), later to become the head office of Bell Systems, was founded and for the next 80 years it succeeded in keeping a near-monopoly over US telecommunications networks.

The first international telephone calls were made between Paris and Brussels in 1887. At the end of the nineteenth century, the USA had the largest number of telephones, due largely to the fact that they were manufactured there. International Western Electric, subsidiary of Western Electric, itself owned by AT&T, was the first multinational network of production and sales, setting up branches in most European countries including

Britain, Spain, France and Italy as well as in Japan, China and Australia (Mattelart, 1994). However, the area covered by telephones was very limited – telephone networks acquired a global dimension only in 1956 when the first telephone cable was laid under the Atlantic.

The era of news agencies

The newspaper industry played a significant role in the development of international telegraph networks, to be able to exploit the rapid increase in demand for news, especially the financial information required to conduct international commerce. The establishment of the news agency was the most important development in the newspaper industry of the nineteenth century, altering the process of news dissemination, nationally and internationally. The increasing demand among business clients for commercial information – on businesses, stocks, currencies, commodities, harvests – ensured that news agencies grew in power and reach.

The French Havas Agency (ancestor of AFP) was founded in 1835, the German agency Wolff in 1849 and the British Reuters in 1851. The US agency, Associated Press (AP) was established in 1848, but only the three European agencies began as international ones; not until the turn of the century did an American agency move in this direction. From the start, Reuters made commercial and financial information its speciality, while Havas was to combine information and advertising.

These three European news agencies, Havas, Wolff and Reuters, all of which were subsidized by their respective governments, controlled information markets in Europe and were looking beyond the continent to expand their operations. In 1870 they signed a treaty to divide up the world market between the three of them. The resulting association of agencies (ultimately to include about 30 members), became known variously as the League of Allied Agencies (*les Agences Alliées*), as the World League of Press Associations, as the National Agencies Alliances, and as the Grand Alliance of Agencies. More commonly, it was referred to simply as the 'Ring Combination' (Desmond, 1978). In the view of some it was a 'cartel', and its influence on world opinion was used by governments to suit their own purposes (Boyd-Barrett, 1980; Mattelart, 1994).

The basic contract, drawn up in 1870, set 'reserved territories' for the three agencies. Each agency made its own separate contracts with national agencies or other subscribers within its own territory. Provision was made for a few 'shared' territories, in which two, sometimes all three agencies had equal rights. In practice, Reuters, whose idea it was, tended to dominate the Ring Combination. Its influence was greatest because its reserved territories were larger or of greater news importance than most others. It also had more staff and stringers throughout the world and thus contributed more original news to the pool. British control of cable lines made London itself an

unrivalled centre for world news, further enhanced by Britain's wide-ranging commercial, financial and imperial activities (Read, 1992).

In 1890, Wolff, Reuters and Havas signed a new treaty for a further ten years. Havas emerged stronger than ever – it gained South America as an exclusive territory, and also Indo-China. But Havas yielded its position in Egypt, which became exclusive Reuters territory but continued to share Belgium and Central America with Reuters. 'The major European agencies were based in imperial capitals. Their expansion outside Europe was intimately associated with the territorial colonialism of the late nineteenth century' (Boyd-Barrett, 1980: 23).

After the First World War, although Wolff ceased to be a world agency, the cartel continued to dominate international news distribution. The first challenge to their monopoly came from AP when it started supplying news to Latin America. With the international news cartel broken by the 1930s, AP and other US agencies such as United Press (UP), founded in 1907, (which later became United Press International (UPI) in 1958 after merger with Hearst's International News Service), began to encroach on their terrain. AP began to expand internationally, paralleling political changes in Europe with the weakening of the European empires after the First World War.

The advent of popular media

The expansion of printing presses and the internationalization of news agencies were contributing factors in the growth of a worldwide newspaper

industry. *The Times of India* was founded in 1838 while Southeast Asia's premier newspaper *The Straits Times* was started as a daily newspaper from Singapore in 1858. Advances in printing technology meant that newspapers in non-European languages could also be printed and distributed. By 1870 more than 140 newspapers were being printed in Indian languages; in Cairo *Al-Abram*, the newspaper which has defined Arab journalism for more than a century, was established in 1875, while in 1890, Japan's most respected newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* (Morning Sun) was founded. In Europe, the growth of popular press was unprecedented in the 1890s – France's *Le Petit Parisien* had a circulation of 1 million in 1890, while in Britain, the *Daily Mail*, launched in 1896, which redefined boundaries of journalism, was doing roaring business.

Newspapers were used by leaders to articulate nascent nationalism in many Asian countries. The Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat Sen founded *Chung-kuo Jih-pao* (Chinese daily paper) in 1899 while in India Mahatma Gandhi used *Young India*, later named *Harijan* to propagate an anti-colonial agenda.

However, it was the USA which had the biggest international impact on media cultures symbolized by William Randolph Hearst, one of the world's first media moguls. His *New York Journal* heralded the penny press in the USA, while the International News Service, which sold articles, crossword puzzles and comic strips to newspapers, created the world's first syndicate service. It was succeeded in 1915 by the King Feature Syndicate, whose comic strips were used by newspapers all over the world, for most of the twentieth century.

The internationalization of a nascent mass culture, however, began with the film industry. Following the first screening in Paris and Berlin in 1895, films were being seen a year later from Bombay to Buenos Aires. By the First World War, the European market was dominated by the firm Pathé, founded in 1907 in France, whose distribution bureaux were located in seven European countries as well as in Turkey, the USA and Brazil. The development of independent studios between 1909 and 1913 led to the growth of the Hollywood film industry which was to dominate global film production (Mattelart, 1994).

In the realm of popular music, the dog and trumpet logo of 'His Master's Voice' (HMV) label of the Gramophone Company, became a global image. Within a few years of the founding of the company, in 1897, its recording engineers were at work in the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, India, Iran and China. By 1906, 60 per cent of the company's profits were earned from overseas sales (Pandit, 1996: 57). After its merger with the US giant Columbia Gramophone Company in 1931 it formed EMI (Electric and Musical Industries), beginning a process of Anglo-American domination of the international recording industry that has lasted throughout the twentieth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century, US-based advertising companies

were already looking beyond the domestic market. J. Walter Thompson, for example, established 'sales bureau' in London in 1899. The USA, where advertising was given its modern form, was an early convert to the power of advertising, making it the world's most consumerist society. The spending on advertising in the USA increased from \$0.45 billion at the start of the century to \$212 billion by its end (see Figure 1.1).

In the twentieth century, advertising became increasingly important in international communication. From the 1901 advertisement for the record label His Master's Voice to the famous 1929 line 'The pause that refreshes', to De Beers' hugely popular campaign 'A diamond is forever' put out in 1948, advertisers have aimed at international audiences. This trend became even stronger with the growth of radio and television, with messages such as Pepsi-Cola's 1964 'The Pepsi generation'; Coca-Cola's 1970 rebuke 'It's the real thing'; Nike's 1988 slogan 'Just do it' and Coca-Cola's 1993 one-word advice, 'Always', being consumed across the world.

The American cowboy and masculine trademark of The Marlboro Man, introduced in 1955 and identified with Philip Morris's Marlboro cigarettes, became a worldwide advertising presence, making Marlboro the best-selling cigarette in the world. Though tobacco advertisements were banned on the USA television in 1971 and since then health groups have fought against promoting smoking through advertisement in the USA and other Western countries, The Marlboro Man was nominated as the icon of the twentieth century by the US trade journal *Advertising Age International*.

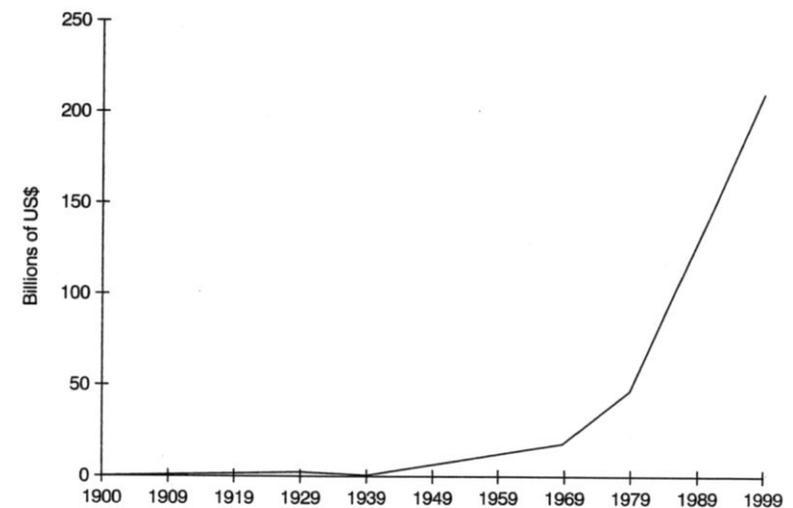


Figure 1.1 A century of advertising: US advertising spend, 1900–99

Radio and international communication

As with other new technologies, Western countries were the first to grasp the strategic implications of radio communication after the first radio transmissions of the human voice in 1902. Unlike cable, radio equipment was comparatively cheap and could be sold on a mass scale. There was also a growing awareness among American businesses that radio, if properly developed and controlled, might be used to undercut the huge advantages of British-dominated international cable links (Luther, 1988). They realized that, while undersea cables and their landing terminals could be vulnerable, and their location required bilateral negotiations between nations, radio waves could travel anywhere, unrestrained by politics or geography.

At the 1906 international radiotelegraph conference in Berlin, 28 states debated radio equipment standards and procedures to minimize interference. The great naval powers, who were also the 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 Radiotelegraph Union of its intention to use a specific radio frequency (Mattelart, 1994).

As worldwide radio broadcasting grew, stations that transmitted across national borders had, in accordance with an agreement signed in London in 1912, to register their use of a particular wavelength with the international secretariat of the International Radiotelegraph Union. But there was no mechanism for either assigning or withholding slots; it was a system of first come, first served. Thus the companies or states with the necessary capital and technology prevailed in taking control of the limited spectrum space, to the disadvantage of smaller and less developed countries (Hamelink, 1994).

Two distinct types of national radio broadcasting emerged: in the USA, the Radio Act of 1927 enshrined its established status as a commercial enterprise, funded by advertising, while the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), founded in 1927, as a non-profit, public broadcasting monopoly, provided a model for several other European and Commonwealth countries (McChesney, 1993).

As the strongest voice in the World Radio Conference in Washington in 1927, private companies helped to write an agreement that allowed them to continue developing their use of the spectrum, without regard to possible signal interference for other countries. By being embodied in an international treaty, these provisions took on the character of 'international law', including the principle of allocating specific wavelengths for particular purposes (Luther, 1988). A major consequence of this conference was to reinforce US and European domination of the international radio spectrum. However, it was the Soviet Union which became the first nation to exploit this new medium for international broadcasting.

The battle of the airwaves

The strategic significance of international communication grew with the expansion of the new medium. Ever since the advent of radio, its use for propaganda was an integral part of its development, with its power to influence values, beliefs and attitudes (Taylor, 1995). During the First World War, the power of radio was quickly recognized as vital both to the management of public opinion at home and propaganda abroad, directed at allies and enemies alike. As noted by a distinguished scholar of propaganda: 'During the war period it came to be recognised that the mobilisation of men and means was not sufficient; there must be mobilisation of opinion. Power over opinion, as over life and property, passed into official hands' (Lasswell, 1927: 14).

The Russian communists were one of the earliest political groups to realize the ideological and strategic importance of broadcasting, and the first public broadcast to be recorded in the history of wireless propaganda was by the Council of the People's Commissars of Lenin's historic message on 30 October 1917: 'The All-Russian Congress of Soviets has formed a new Soviet Government. The Government of Kerensky has been overthrown and arrested. Kerensky himself has fled. All official institutions are in the hands of the Soviet Government' (quoted in Hale, 1975: 16).

The Soviet Union was one of the first countries to take advantage of a medium which could reach across continents and national boundaries to an international audience. The world's first short-wave radio broadcasts were sent out from Moscow in 1925. Within five years, the All-Union Radio was regularly broadcasting communist propaganda in German, French, Dutch and English.

By the time the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, radio broadcasting had become an extension of international diplomacy. The head of Hitler's Propaganda Ministry, Josef Goebbels, believed in the power of radio broadcasting as a tool of propaganda. 'Real broadcasting is true propaganda. Propaganda means fighting on all battlefields of the spirit, generating, multiplying, destroying, exterminating, building and undoing. Our propaganda is determined by what we call German race, blood and nation' (quoted in Hale, 1975: 2).

In 1935, Nazi Germany turned its attention to disseminating worldwide the racist and anti-Semitic ideology of the Third Reich. The Nazi *Reichsender* broadcasts were targeted at Germans living abroad, as far afield as South America and Australia. These short-wave transmissions were rebroadcast by Argentina, home to many Germans. Later the Nazis expanded their international broadcasting to include several languages, including Afrikaans, Arabic and Hindustani and, by 1945, German radio was broadcasting in more than 50 languages.

In Fascist Italy, under Benito Mussolini, a Ministry of Print and Propaganda was created to promote Fascist ideals and win public opinion

for colonial campaigns such as the invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1935, and support for Francisco Franco's Fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Mussolini also distributed radio sets to Arabs, tuned to one station alone – *Radio Bari* in southern Italy. This propaganda prompted the British Foreign Office to create a monitoring unit of the BBC to listen in to international broadcasts and later to start an Arabic language service to the region.

The Second World War saw an explosion in international broadcasting as a propaganda tool on both sides. Japanese wartime propaganda included short-wave transmissions from *Nippon Hoso Kyoka* (NHK) the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation, to South-east and East Asia and also to the West coast of the United States, which had a large Japanese-American population. In addition, NHK also transmitted high-quality propaganda programmes such as *Zero Hour* aimed at US troops in the Pacific islands (Wood, 1992).

Although the BBC, apart from the Empire Service (the precursor of the BBC World Service), was not directly controlled by the British Government, its claim to independence during the war, was 'little more than a self-adoratory part of the British myth' (Curran and Seaton, 1996: 147). John Reith, its first Director General and the spirit behind the BBC, was for a time the Minister of Information in 1940 and resented being referred to as 'Dr Goebbels' opposite number' (Hickman, 1995: 29).

The Empire Service had been established in 1932 with the aim of connecting the scattered parts of the British Empire. Funded by the Foreign Office, it tended to reflect the government's public diplomacy. At the beginning of the Second World War, the BBC was broadcasting in seven foreign languages apart from English – Afrikaans, Arabic, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish (Walker, 1992: 36). By the end of the war it was broadcasting in 39 languages.

The French General De Gaulle used the BBC's French service, during the war years, to send messages to the resistance movement in occupied France and for a time between October 1942 and May 1943, the BBC broadcast a weekly 15-minute newsletter to Russia with the co-operation of the Russian news agency TASS (*Telegrafnoe agentstvo Sovetskogo Soiuza*). It also broadcast *The Shadow of the Swastika*, the first of a series of dramas about the Nazi Party. The BBC helped the US Army to create the American Forces Network, which broadcast recordings of American shows for US forces in Britain, Middle East and Africa. More importantly, given Britain's proximity to the war theatre, the BBC played a key role in the propaganda offensive and often it was more effective than American propaganda which, as British media historian Asa Briggs comments was 'both distant and yet too brash, too unsophisticated and yet too contrived to challenge the propaganda forces already at work on the continent' (1970: 412).

Until the Second World War radio in the USA was known more for its commercial potential as a vehicle for advertisements rather than a govern-

ment propaganda tool, but after 1942, the year the Voice of America (VOA) was founded, the US Government made effective use of radio to promote its political interests – a process which reached its high point during the decades of Cold War.

The Cold War – from communist propaganda to capitalist persuasion

The victorious allies of the Second World War – the Soviet Union and the West led by the United States – soon fell out as differences emerged about the post-war order in Europe and the rest of the world. The clash was, in essence, about two contrasting views of organizing society: the Soviet view, inspired by Marxism–Leninism, and the capitalist individualism championed by the USA. The defeat of Nazism and militarism of Japan was accompanied by the US-proclaimed victory of democracy and the creation of the United Nations system. Though the 1947 General Assembly Resolution 110 (II) condemned 'all forms of propaganda which are designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression', both camps indulged in regular propaganda as the battle lines of the Cold War were being drawn (quoted in Taylor, 1997).

Soviet broadcast propaganda

In the same year, the Soviet Union revived the Comintern (Communist International) as Cominform (Communist Information Bureau), to organize a worldwide propaganda campaign orchestrated by the Administration of Agitation and Propaganda of the Communist Party Central Committee (AGITPROP). Communist propaganda, a central component of post-war Soviet diplomacy, was primarily aimed at the Eastern bloc, and, increasingly, to what came to be known as the Third World.

During the Cold War years, TASS remained a major source of news among the media in eastern bloc countries. The news agency which began as the St Petersburg Telegraph Agency (SPTA) in 1904, underwent a number of name changes before becoming Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) in 1925. In 1914, it was renamed the Petrograd Telegraph Agency (PTA) and in 1917, the Bolsheviks made the PTA the central news agency; a year later the PTA and the Press Bureau, also under the Council of People's Commissars, were united to form the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA).

Soviet propaganda – in heavy polemical Marxist terms about the ideological clash between communism and imperialism – was couched in the language of the class struggle between the capitalist bourgeoisie and the global

proletariat, ideas which fell on receptive ears in countries colonized by European powers.

However, one of the first major propaganda battles the Soviet Union waged was in 1948 against a fellow socialist country – Yugoslavia, where Marshal Tito's efforts to chart a foreign policy independent of dictates from Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, resulted in a massive propaganda effort to overthrow the leadership in Belgrade. Another test of Soviet propaganda in Eastern Europe came with the crisis in Hungary in 1956, where it had to fight hostile Western propaganda and protect a client regime. Similarly, during the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact countries under Moscow's orders, Russian broadcasts to Czechoslovakia jumped from 17 hours per week just before the August 1968 invasion to 168 at the height of the crisis, falling back to 84 by September (Hale, 1975: 24).

By the late 1960s, Moscow Radio was the world's largest single international broadcaster – between 1969 to 1972 it broadcast more programme hours than the United States. In addition, it used more languages – 84 – than any other international broadcaster, partly because the Soviet Union itself was a multilingual country. Between 1950 and 1973 external broadcasting from the Soviet Union grew from 533 hours to around 1950 hours per week. This is comparable with the whole of US external broadcasting – the world's largest – including the official Voice of America (VOA) and the clandestine Radio Liberty (RL) and Radio Free Europe (RFE) – at 497 hours per week in 1950 and 2 060 in 1973 (Hale, 1975: 174).

Soviet broadcast policies were aimed at countering Western propaganda and promoting Moscow's line on international affairs among the world's communist parties, which became increasingly important in Soviet thinking after the Sino-Soviet split of 1968. The Sino-Soviet split – more influenced by geo-strategic than ideological differences – led to mutual propaganda battles between the communist giants, with Radio Moscow increasing its Chinese language broadcasts from 77 hours a week in 1967 to 200 hours in 1972, while China, which by early 1970s had become the world's third largest international broadcaster, also increased its broadcasts criticising Soviet 'revisionism'.

While Soviet broadcasts – known more for their party line than professional journalism – had little impact in the West, in contrast to the popularity of Western broadcasts in the Eastern bloc, they nevertheless set the news agendas in Eastern Europe. The Soviet presence was also evident in the way the news media were organized in many communist countries and among socialist nations of the South.

However, Radio Moscow was no match for Western broadcasters in terms of the power of its transmitters and the availability of broadcasting outlets outside the communist world. Apart from broadcasters in Eastern Europe, Soviet broadcasts had only one other outlet – Radio Habana in Cuba, which was suspended after the ending of the Cold War. With their worldwide network of relay stations, the Western powers had a distinct

advantage and were able to beam propaganda with little interference (Nelson, 1997). Since there was scant interest among Western populations for Russian international broadcasts, Western governments did not have to worry about jamming them. In contrast, the authorities in Moscow tried to interfere with Western broadcasts, seeing them as a network of 'radio saboteurs' subverting the achievements of socialism.

US broadcast propaganda

Although the Voice of America had been a part of US diplomacy during the Second World War, with the advent of the Cold War, propaganda became a crucial component of US foreign broadcasting (Sorensen, 1968; Lisann, 1975; Rawnsley, 1996). The key instruments of US international broadcasting – The Voice of America, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, and the American Forces Network – were all state-funded. The VOA was the official mouthpiece of the US Government, the largest single element in the US Information Agency (USIA) and ultimately answerable to the US State Department. Unlike the BBC World Service, it depended on official comment as it only used VOA staff for commentaries, thereby restricting the range of opinions expressed by its programmes and thus straining its credibility as an international broadcaster.

An early indication of the increasing use of radio for propaganda was evident in the way VOA was used to promote US President Harry Truman's 'Campaign for Truth' against communism, following the outbreak in 1950 of the Korean War. The campaign was aimed at legitimizing US involvement in the Korean War, which claimed more than a million lives and became the first test of superpower rivalry in the developing world, a pattern repeated in several other Cold War-related conflicts in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

A year later, in 1951, Truman set up a Psychological Strategy Board, responsible to the National Security Council, to advise on international anti-communist propaganda. In 1953, his successor President Dwight Eisenhower appointed a personal adviser on 'psychological warfare' – resulting in an increased stridency in the anti-communist rhetoric emanating from VOA.

In the United States, propaganda was part of what John Martin, a former researcher for the USIA, called 'facilitative communication' which he defined as 'activity that is designed to keep lines open and to maintain them against the day when they will be needed for propaganda purposes' (Martin, 1976: 263). This included press releases, seminars, conferences, and exhibitions, as well as books, films, educational and cultural exchange programmes and scholarships for technical and scientific research.

VOA operated a global network of relay stations to propagate the ideal of 'the American way of life' to international listeners. The nodal points in this worldwide network linked to the control centre in Washington,

included Bangkok for Southeast Asia; Poro and Tinang in the Philippines for China and Southeast Asia; Colombo for South Asia; Tangier in Morocco, for North Africa; Rhodes in Greece, for the Middle East; Selebi-Phikwe in Botswana, for southern Africa; Monrovia in Liberia for Sub-Saharan Africa; Munich for Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Woofferton in England (leased from the BBC) for the former Soviet Union; Greenville in the USA for Latin America; and Punta Gorda in Belize for Central America (*see map*).

The transmitters were chosen for their strategic locations, close to the target zone to ensure a stronger and more stable signal and to overcome possible jamming. In many instances the locations of transmitters remained a secret as did the broadcasting of subversive and misleading information to confuse the West's Cold War adversaries.

The BBC

In contrast to US state propaganda, the BBC's External Services prided themselves on presenting a mature, balanced view, winning by argument, rather than hammering home a point, in the best tradition of British understatement. This proclaimed policy of 'balance' gave the BBC more international credibility than any other broadcasting organization in the world. The BBC's dependence on the British Government was evident, since its budget was controlled by the Treasury through grant-in-aid from the Foreign and Colonial Office (now called the Foreign and Commonwealth Office), which could also decide which languages were used for programmes and for how long they were broadcast to each audience. For example, during the Berlin blockade of 1948-49 almost the entire output of the BBC external services was directed to Eastern bloc countries. In addition, the government exerted indirect influence on the BBC since the relay stations and overseas transmitters were negotiated through or owned by the Diplomatic Wireless Service.

What distinguished the BBC was its capacity to criticize its own government, however indirectly.

The 'special relationship' that characterized US/UK ties during the Cold War years also was in evidence in the realm of international broadcasting. With the establishment of its Russian language unit in 1946, the BBC World Service played a key part in the Cold War through its strategically located global network of relay stations. These included: stations in the Ascension Island and in Antigua (where it shared transmitters and relay station with the German radio station Deutsche Welle to cover the Western hemisphere); a multi-frequency broadcasting centre in Cyprus (for the Middle East, Europe and northern Africa); at Masirah, leased from Oman (for the Gulf region); in Seychelles (for east Africa); in Kranji in Singapore (for Southeast Asia); and in Hong Kong (for east Asia, especially China).

Other Western stations such as Deutsche Welle and Radio France International (RFI) also contributed to the war of words. RFI, particularly strong in the former colonies of France, had two main relay stations – at Moyabi in Gabon and in Montsinery in French Guiana. In addition, it leased transmitting facilities from commercial *Radio Monte Carlo* in Cyprus to broadcast to the Middle East. Unlike Britain, France did not play such an important role in the Cold War broadcasting battles – RFI was not jammed by the Soviet authorities. Concerned with maintaining its independent foreign policy and with a cultural focus, French international broadcasting concentrated on promoting its culture and commerce in its former colonies in Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean and parts of the Pacific, not least to boost the export of French broadcasting equipment (Wood, 1992: 199).

Cold War propaganda in the Third World

Another major battle for the hearts and minds of people during the Cold War was fought in the Third World, where countries were emerging from centuries of subjugation under European colonial powers. The Soviet Union had recognized that, since the nature of the anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa was largely anti-Western, the political situation was ripe for promoting communism. The West, on the other hand, was interested in continuing to control raw materials and develop potential markets for Western products. Radio was seen as a crucial medium, given the low levels of literacy among most of the population of the developing countries. In addition, the nascent media in the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa were almost always state-controlled and thus less able to compete with foreign media, with their higher credibility and technological superiority.

The Middle East was a particular target for Western broadcasters, given its geo-strategic importance as the source of the world's largest supply of oil.

It is no coincidence that the Arabic Service, created in 1938, was the first foreign-language section of the BBC's Empire Service, to be followed by the Persian service in 1940. The French, British and American broadcasters dominated the airwaves in the Arab world, while the Arabic service of Kol Israel (the Voice of Israel) also played a key propaganda role in the Middle East. Western support for the conservative Arab countries and the feudal order they perpetuated was also reflected in the treatment of Arab radical nationalism in Western broadcasting.

The British Government used a Cyprus-based British commercial broadcaster Sharq-al Adna to broadcast 'Voice of Britain' anti-Egyptian propaganda, however, 'with little effect' (Walker, 1992: 75). To counter this, Egyptian President Gamaal Nasser used the radio to promote the idea of pan-Arabism. The Cairo-based 'Voice of the Arabs,' was an international service, which in the 1950s and 1960s became the 'pulpit of revolution', notably in the leftist revolution in Iraq in 1958.

Pan-Arab sentiment also helped the Palestinian 'liberation radios' which regularly and often clandestinely broadcast from PLO offices in Cairo, Beirut, Algiers, Baghdad and Tripoli, moving position to avoid Israeli attacks. These radios played an important role in keeping the Palestinian struggle alive. In Algeria the Voice of Algeria, the radio station of the Front National de Libération (FNL) played an important role in the national war of liberation against the French colonial authorities. In the words of Frantz Fanon, the radio 'created out of nothing, brought the nation to life and endowed every citizen with a new status, *telling him so explicitly*' (Fanon, 1970: 80, italics in the original).

In Asia, in addition to direct broadcasts from the USA, VOA operated from Japan, Thailand (where the Voice of Free Asia was part of VOA) and Sri Lanka. Following the Chinese revolution in 1949, US priority was to stop the expansion of communism into other parts of Asia. In 1951, the CIA funded the Manila-based Radio Free Asia, notable for its anti-communist stridency. It was later replaced by Radio of Free Asia which continued until 1966 (Taylor, 1997: 43).

During the Vietnam War, US propaganda reached new heights (Chandler, 1981; Hallin, 1986). The Joint US Public Office became the delegated authority for all propaganda activities, the chief aims of which were to undermine the support for communists and to keep the support of the South Vietnamese. These messages were conveyed mainly through dropping leaflets and broadcasting from low flying aircraft. It is estimated that during the seven years it operated in Vietnam, the USIA, supported by the armed forces, dropped nearly 50 billion leaflets – nearly '1,500 for every person in both parts of the country' (Chandler, 1981: 3). Radio played a crucial role in the psychological warfare. The CIA also ran Voice of the Patriotic Militiamen's Front in South Vietnam and two anti-Sukarno operations in Indonesia – Voice of Free Indonesia and Radio Sulawesi.

In Latin America, an area that the USA has traditionally regarded as its

sphere of influence, US media propaganda has been intense, especially since the communist revolution in Cuba in 1959 led by Fidel Castro. During the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, President John Kennedy launched a virulent anti-Castro propaganda campaign with his *Alianza para el Progreso* programme, in what was, in the words of the former Director of VOA, George Allen, one of 'the largest concentrations of propaganda effort unleashed against an individual since Stalin tried to purge Tito in 1948' (quoted in Hale, 1975: 101). Unable to dislodge Castro from power and concerned that his success might promote anti-US sentiments in other parts of Latin America, the US Government resorted to using propaganda, notably with the introduction in 1983 of Radio Marti and later, in 1990, of TV Marti, which Cuba considered an hostile act, violating its sovereignty (Alexandre, 1993).

Given its limited geo-strategic importance in international relations Africa remained a low priority area for Cold War propaganda. However, as large areas of the continent were parts of the British Empire, the BBC had been broadcasting to Africa since 1940. In later years, the main broadcasting languages were English, French, Hausa, Portuguese and Swahili.

In the 1970s, VOA broadcast to Africa in English, French and Swahili, primarily to what were known locally as 'wa-benzi' (Mercedes-Benz owners, the African elite). Though Radio Moscow broadcast in several African languages – usually a translation of anti-imperialist material – its effectiveness was limited given the lack of communication infrastructure in many African countries. The Soviet Union invested in transmitters and training courses in the Cameroon while the Chinese supported broadcasting in Zambia and Tanzania. Under the socialist government of President Julius Nyerere, Radio Tanzania became the nerve centre of liberation movements in southern Africa and played an important role in the anti-apartheid struggle. However, socialist radio stations were no match for the powerful transmitters of Western broadcasters, such as those for BBC from Ascension Island and for VOA from Monrovia.

Broadcast propaganda was also used in areas where the Cold War was often very hot, such as Angola, where US and South Africa-backed UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) rebels used their own radio station – The Voice of the Resistance of the Black Cockerel – which began broadcasting from South Africa in 1979 and was installed in Angola under the CIA's covert aid programme (Windrich, 1992).

Although developing countries were initially receptive to the Soviet message of freedom from colonialism, in the 1950s and 1960s, the economic power of the West and the dependency on colonial ties, coupled with the increasing influence of modernizing elites, meant that attraction for communism was waning. As major developing countries, such as India, Indonesia and Egypt, opted for Non-Alignment – a movement founded in 1961 among developing countries which claimed to eschew Cold War bloc politics,

joining neither Western nor Eastern alliance – a new perspective on international communication began to emerge. Looking beyond the Cold War bipolarity, the Non-Aligned countries demanded that international communication issues be seen in terms of North–South rather than East–West categories.

International communication and development

For nearly half a century, the Cold War divided the world into hostile East–West blocs. This had significant implications for the development of Third World countries, most of whom wanted to avoid bloc politics and concentrate on the economic emancipation of their populations. The phrase 'Third World' itself was a product of the Cold War, said to have been coined by French economic historian Alfred Sauvy in 1952, when the world was divided between the capitalist First World, led by the United States and the communist Second World with its centre in Moscow. The 'Third World' was the mass of countries remaining outside these two blocs¹ (Brandt Commission, 1981; South Commission, 1990). National liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America had altered the political map of the world. The vast territory occupied in 1945 by European colonial powers extended over 36 million sq. km; by 1960 as a result of decolonization the area under colonial occupation had shrunk to 13 million sq. km. For the newly independent ex-colonial states, international communication opened up opportunities for development.

The Non-Aligned Movement, through the Group of 77, established in 1964, began to demand greater economic justice in such UN forums as UNCTAD and in 1974, the UN General Assembly formally approved their demand for the creation of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), a democratic interdependent economic order, based on equality and sovereignty, including the right to 'pursue progressive social transformation that enables the full participation of the population in the development process' (Hamelink, 1979: 145). While this remained largely an ideal, it provided a new framework to redefine international relations, for the first time after the Second World War, not in terms of East–West categories but by the North–South divide. At the same time, it was argued that the new economic order had to be linked to a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO).

The general improvement in superpower relations in the age of détente, as marked by the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), encouraged the Non-Aligned countries to demand these changes in global economic and informational systems. The conference recognized the need for 'freer and wider dissemination of information of all kinds' (Nordenstreng, 1986). As Chilean scholar Juan Somavia, writing in the mid-1970s, observed:

It is becoming increasingly clear that the transnational communications system has developed with the support and at the service of the transnational power structure. It is an integral part of the system which affords the control of that key instrument of contemporary society: information. It is the vehicle for transmitting values and lifestyles to Third World countries which stimulate the type of consumption and the type of society necessary to the transnational system as a whole.

(Somavia, 1976: 16–17)

Apart from highlighting the structural inequalities in international communication, there were also efforts made among many developing countries, often with financial or technical support from the West, to use communication technologies for development. This could take different forms – from promoting literacy and information about healthcare to spreading consumerism. One area which received particular attention from policy-makers was satellite television, which given its reach, was considered a powerful medium that could be harnessed for educational purposes, and in the long run, to help change social and cultural attitudes of ‘traditional’ people and ‘modernize’ societies.

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International communication at the end of the Cold War

If the East–West ideological battle characterized the Cold War years of international communication, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the break-up of the Soviet Union two years later, transformed the landscape of international politics, profoundly influencing global information and communication.

Television played an important role during the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe. (Ash, 1990), helping to bring the East–West ideological division of Europe to a close. The transition to capitalism was largely peaceful, except in Romania, where at least some of the violence was simulated. The 1989 Timisoara massacre in Romania was ostensibly staged for the world’s TV cameras, in what the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard called, ‘a hijacking of fantasies, affects and the credulity of hundreds of millions of people by means of television’ (1994: 69).

The August 1991 coup in Moscow, which led to the break-up of the Soviet Union, was called ‘the first true media event in the history of the

Soviet Union’. The crisis had been ‘profoundly and decisively shaped by the electronic eye that transformed instantly and continuously, elements of a political confrontation into meaningful scripts with their corresponding images, styles, and symbols’ (Bonnell and Freidin, 1995: 44). Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the media in the eastern bloc countries have gradually been converted to the market (Splichal, 1994; Mickiewicz, 1997).

The end of the Cold War, variously celebrated as the dawn of a ‘new world order’, as ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama, 1992) and even a ‘clash of civilizations’ (Huntington, 1993), profoundly changed the contours of international communication. The superpower rivalry had ended and the bipolar world, which had informed debates on international communication for half a century, suddenly had become unipolar, dominated by the remaining superpower, the United States.

Such Russian words as *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) entered the world’s media vocabulary, representing a fundamental change in Moscow’s thinking towards the entire gamut of international relations. The globalization of *glasnost* contributed to a greater openness in international communication, with Western journalists operating freely from behind the former iron curtain. The stridency of anti-Western rhetoric was also becoming muted in Moscow, while in the West, doubts were being raised about the relevance of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (Elliot, 1988; Woll, 1989; *Time*, 1988).

This shift also affected debates on international information flows within UNESCO, which in the late 1980s, had lost its primacy as the key forum for discussing international communication issues. The focus of debate too had shifted from news and information flows to such areas as global telecommunication and transnational data flows. The Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with its concern about transborder data flow and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), through its Maitland Commission Report, and the IPDC, were becoming increasingly important international fora (Renaud, 1986). The Maitland Report, which symbolized the change in the traditional role of ITU from being a technical group to a more activist organization, gave higher priority to investment in telecommunication, especially telephones² (Ellinghaus and Forrester, 1985).

Another key contributing factor was the availability of new information technologies such as direct broadcasting satellites (DBS), fibre optics and microcomputers. The growing convergence between information and informatics – the combination of computer and telecommunication systems, traditionally dealt with as separate entities – made it essential to re-examine international communication in the light of technological innovations.

As the public ownership of state assets model, represented in its extreme form in the Soviet system, was dismantled, privatization became the new mantra, with the opening up of new markets in Eastern Europe and the

former Soviet Union adding urgency to the privatisation project. The globalization of communication was made possible with the innovation of new information and communication technologies, increasingly integrated into a privatized global communication infrastructure. The 'time-space compression' that new technologies encouraged made it possible for media and telecommunication corporations to operate in a global market, part of an international neo-liberal capitalist system. As discussed in Chapter 3, the privatization of international communication industries became a major development of the 1990s, accelerated by the liberalization of global trade, under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Notes

1. The countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America were also the 'non-industrialized', 'underdeveloped' or 'developing countries'. The term 'the South' gained currency in the 1980s after the Brandt Commission report which defined 'the South' thus: 'in general terms, and although neither is a uniform or permanent grouping, "North" and "South" are broadly synonymous with "rich" and "poor," "developed" and "developing".' (Brandt Commission Report, 1981, p. 31). This division was later reinforced by the South Commission, adding, 'while countries of the North are, by and large, in control of their destinies, those of the South are very vulnerable to external factors and lacking in functioning sovereignty' (South Commission, 1990: 1).
2. The Independent Commission for World-wide Telecommunication Development, the 17-member commission headed by Sir Donald Maitland of the UK, was established in 1983 by the ITU to recommend ways to stimulate the expansion of global telecommunications. It submitted its report in 1985 (ITU, 1985).