

## ■ Academic Paper

# A comparative analysis of Channels TV and CNN's coverage of World News

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This study did an analysis of the Western and Third world coverage of World News using the broadcast stations (CNN and Channels TV) as case study. In other words, the study sought to examine if the Western and Third World nations are still guilty of imbalance, bias and distortion in their treatment of news. The findings showed that both the North and South nations are guilty of bias and imbalance in their coverage of World News and that each nation seeks to promote their interest rather than a true world interest or the interest of their counterpart nations. The study further revealed that the Third World media still depend heavily on Western media sources for its news albeit their standpoint on the News Flow debate. About 50% of the entire World News stories on Channels TV were sourced 'outside', while about 40% were unidentified. Only 10% were from the in-house personnel. It was also observed that about 55 and 67% of World News coverage by Channels TV and CNN, respectively, were focused on 'bad news'; an age-long controversy that has bedeviled news coverage globally. In view of the foregoing, it has been recommended that there is need for the acceptance of 'imbalance' as a major feature of all media systems as well as a re-evaluation of the standards and values of news evaluation. The rapid industrialization of Third World economies will also go a long way to stop the one-way traffic in international communication which is what encourages media dependence.

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## INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying that the News Flow Controversy is one of the current and most topical issues in international communication today. Generations have come and gone, issues have been raised and lowered, yet the News Flow Controversy remains undeterred. The controversy is largely about the demand by the Third World countries known as the South who desire a change in the existing pattern of news representation and flow between her countries and that of the First World nations known as the North. It is also one of the key debates in the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Figures 1 and 2).

At present, one constant way of staying connected with our world is through getting adequate information and communication which is customarily given by the media. Information can be regarded as a valued resource that fuels the economy and at the same time drives individuals. Even today's advanced technologies in many areas

are deeply immersed in information and that is why today's society is called an 'Information Society'. Abeh (2007: 1) plainly establishes the importance of communication in the society thus:

*Every human society so called primitive or modern, depends on communication to enable its members to live together, to maintain and modify working arrangements about the social order and social regulation and to cope with the environment.*

Despite the need for adequate information/communication in countries, there are still expanding gaps between and within countries. Specifically, the type of gap being discussed is the one that exists between the North and South countries. 'Information empowers, and those who work with information must realize that its flow like good communication must be two way' (Godlee, 2008: 1) (Figures 3 and 4)

This situation can be regarded as an 'Information Divide or Gap'. This gap between the Western and Third World countries is currently widening such that it is more vivid than any imbalance in other fields. As mentioned earlier, the News Flow Controversy is one of the key debates in the NWICO. Without any doubt, the debate which was taken up by the United Nations Educational,

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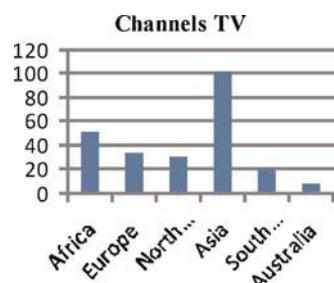


Figure 1 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to continents.

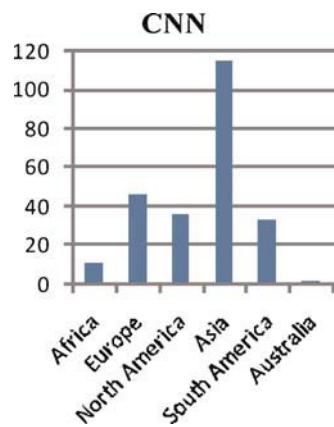


Figure 2 Distribution of World News on CNN according to continents.

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) dates back to when the industrialized countries of the West colonized the Third World nations. This colonialism which led to imperialism created a situation whereby the Western countries exploited the South and had political control over their resources in order to satisfy their interest. According to Okunna (1993: 93–94), 'the demand for NWICO is a demand for the establishment of a free and balanced flow of communication and a rejection of any attempt at cultural domination' (Figures 5 and 6).

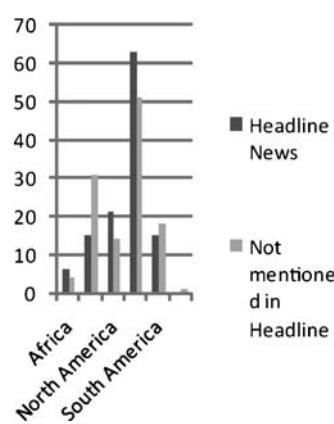


Figure 3 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to prominence attached.

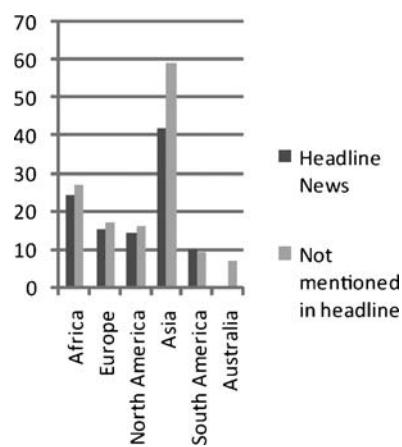


Figure 4 Distribution of World News on CNN according to prominence attached.

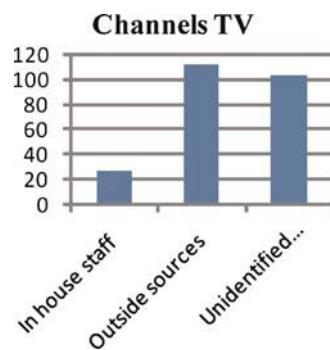


Figure 5 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to news sources.

Historically, the demand for NWICO is traceable to the 1946 UN declaration on freedom of information, which states that countries of the world should propose/recommend policies that will make freedom of information a fundamental human right. NWICO is also meant to address the issues of distortion of contents, control, balance, equality, freedom and access (Ekeanyanwu, 2008). Roger Tatarian, former vice-president of United Press International (UPI), states that a 'one way' rather than a true exchange of information is what we are currently experiencing in international flow of

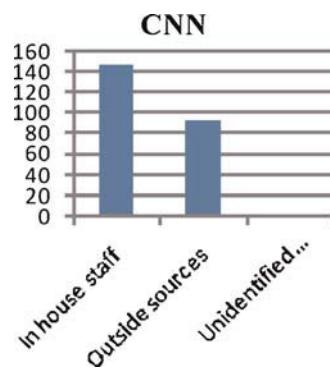


Figure 6 Distribution of World News on CNN according to news sources.

information. According to him, we need a spread out of the information and communication arena to enable easy access for the active participation of countries especially the Third World nations. Williams (2003: 121) plainly describes the situation that occurs in the global news flow scene thus:

*How the media represent the world and what is happening is often controversial and usually a matter of dispute. Individuals, groups and people regularly complain about the ways in which they are portrayed in the media. Their sensitivity stems from the view to be imprisoned inside the misrepresentation and misunderstanding of others can be a withering form of incarceration and such a fate can afflict whole nations and cultures as painfully as individuals.*

The statement above clearly describes what occurs in the global news flow scene. It is nevertheless important to note that the UNESCO made several efforts in addressing this issue and this resulted in the selection of six communication experts to review the communication problems and make recommendations as regards the international communication scene. This committee was formed in 1977 and referred to as the MacBride commission headed by an Irish Diplomat, Sean MacBride. In 1980, the committee completed her task and submitted her final report to the General Conference of UNESCO. This document is known in international communication circles as the MacBride report. It was published under the title 'Many Voices, One World' (Figures 7 and 8).

News flow which refers to the 'movement of data, cultural products and media programmes from one country to another' (Ekeanyanwu, 2008: 65) is guided by the free flow of information principle. However, there are still flaws in the international communication scene as a result of trying to implement this principle. Besides the News Flow Controversy, this study also focuses on a comparative analysis of the World News coverage by the North and South media in line with the News Flow debate. Most studies have indicated that about 80% of international news that flows in the newsroom comes from the four major news agencies in the West which are Reuters, Agence France-Presse, UPI

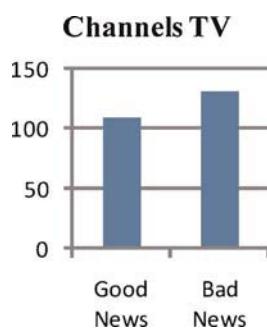


Figure 7 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to the Tone of coverage.

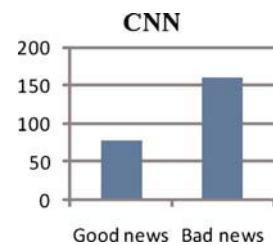


Figure 8 Distribution of World News on CNN according to the tone of coverage.

and the Associated Press. The final report of the MacBride commission has been able to establish the fact that news flow tends towards a North-South direction and hinders development between the developing countries (Figures 9 and 10).

However, statements and empirical evidence have also shown that the South countries are also guilty of the accusations they have raised against the West. This is a scenario of the 'pot calling the kettle black' because research has shown that the news stories found in the Third World media as regards the Western countries are mainly conflict,

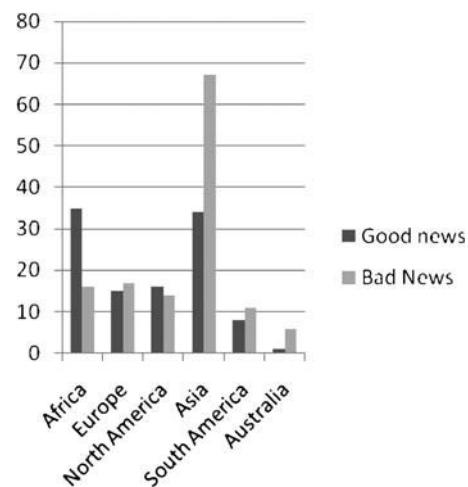


Figure 9 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to tone by geographic spread.

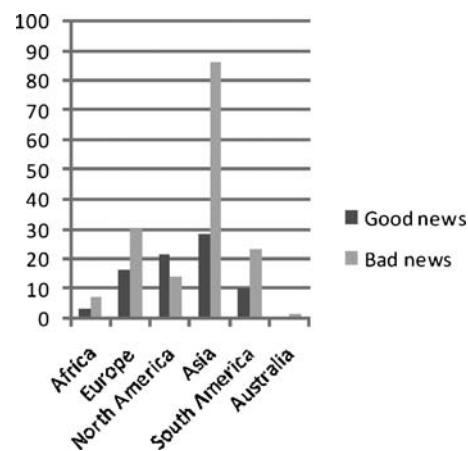


Figure 10 Distribution of World News on CNN according to tone by geographic spread.

war, violence and crime. This shows that the belief that there is imbalance and inequality in the flow of news between the North and South can no longer hold water because the South is also guilty. Nevertheless, this study aims to compare and analyse the North and South's coverage of World News and recommends solutions by which these nations could enjoy a positive and encouraging media image.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For decades now, the debate on News Flow Controversy has been a key discussion in the international communication scene. 'Quite a number of studies and articles have been published in this area and they mainly revolve around imbalance in the quality and quantity of news content as well as the control and domination of the channel through which international news flows' (Ekeanyanwu, 2007). While these studies have shown that the Third World countries are not active members in the news flow scene, few studies exist that show how the North and South countries cover the world.

In the 21st century where new paradigms are emerging on the nature and definition of news, are some or all the issues raised in the early days of the News Flow Debate still hunting the developed and the developing nations in their coverage of World News? Are the North and South nations both guilty of distortion, bias, misrepresentation, abnegation in their coverage of World News? If they are, to what extent and in what areas are they guilty? The attempt to answer these questions lies the major problem which this study hopes to investigate using the case study approach.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Generally, the ultimate objective of this study is to find out if the issues raised in the News Flow Controversy in the 1980s are still inherent in the North and South coverage of World News. Specifically the study also hopes to

- (1) Determine the frequency of news reported about Africa in the Western media and news reported about the Western world in the Third World media.
- (2) Determine how the packaging of news from the Western broadcast stations regarding Africa portrays these countries in the global scene and vice versa.
- (3) Find out if there are similarities and differences between the North and South in how they gather and disseminate World News.
- (4) Determine the content of World News broadcast in the selected news channels.

- (5) Ascertain if issues of imbalance, abnegation, bias, etc are still part of World News broadcast of the selected stations.
- (6) Determine the continents that receive adequate and inadequate coverage in terms of quantity and quality, in the World News broadcast of the selected stations.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Quite a number of research studies usually focus on one side alone as it concerns News Flow Controversy. The question now is whether the issues raised in the early days of the News Flow Debate are still inherent in the coverage of World News by the North and South nations. This angle, which is often ignored and has generated little or no controversy, is the major focus of this study. This study is a current effort to compare and analyse the coverage of World News in the North and South nations using the broadcast stations as a case study. It will further bring to light the image of Africa as portrayed in the Western media and vice versa as well as the similarities and differences between the North and South World News coverage.

The use of content analysis for the broadcast media of communication will also provide solutions to ensure a constructive and encouraging media image for both the North and South nations. In totality, this study has the ability to effectively contribute to the existing body of information in international communication by acting as a reference point especially in the area of News Flow Controversy.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

A great variety of media voices are available in both the North and South countries because of the diversity of the population of the countries, but the focus of this study centres on the coverage of World News by the North and South broadcast media only. Hence, this study is limited to the broadcast station of the North which is the Cable News Network (CNN) and that of the South which is the Channels TV. Furthermore, this study will concentrate on a six-week period of watching and analysing the coverage of World News by each broadcast station for 30 minutes each day (Monday–Friday).

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK LITERATURE REVIEW

Gradually, the media has changed its form and projection of reality and the effect of this change

cannot be overlooked because of its long-term effect on human existence such as the present man-made gap created between the North and South nations. The fact that the state of international communication and international relations has changed considerably is also undeniable. However, the 'most obvious fact is that some countries are rich in communication and information while the nations that are poor in resources are also deprived of communication and information terms' (Ekeanyanwu, 2005).

Webster (2004: 3) contends that 'people are only key players in the information society if they have been blessed by a first-rate education, which endows them with the informational abilities to survive in a new and globalized economy'. Communication can be used to promote World understanding and co-operation, to fuse and cross fertilize and to accelerate modernization and industrialization. International communication which is the flow of news and information across countries has been seen as the model or bedrock which all nations should embrace, but this is not so in the present communication World as we discover that the World has been divided and the developed nations are in control. It is indeed dismaying, to know that even after the acceptance of the MacBride report, the industrialized North still undeniably use belittling adjectives and stereotypes against the Third World nations.

Without doubt, Information is a key factor to any development process and if it is wrongly portrayed, the development process would be mired. Uche (1996: 16–17) notes that the 'global manipulation of the media by the industrialized North to the continued disadvantage of the South, most areas of which are still underdeveloped, makes us believe that the North and South live in 'Many Worlds, One Voice'. The One voice is one the industrially rich North has imposed through its claim to economic and technological superiority and hegemony'. Ekeanyanwu (2005: 254) observes that no matter the substance of imbalanced flow, the argument is misplaced in three important respects: (1) the content of World news channels do not give rise to the controversy *per se* but the economic data daily disseminated across national borders; (2) no journalist or scholar, at the end of the day, can organize and control basic changes that finally occur in the international communication system.

The crux of the debate is that imbalances and inequalities exist in the international communication scene and this has led to controversies, regarding the adequate flow of information between the North and South nations. It is common knowledge that news from the Third World countries usually make their appearance in Western media when they are sensational or when they concentrate on drama, strong enough to arouse Western sensibilities and curiosity. What is, how-

ever, shovved aside is the fact that the Third World countries are probably equally biased against the Western World. The imbalance in news flow, between developed and developing countries, results from the distribution of power (i.e. the military, economic and political) in the world system.

The issue of bias, inequality and imbalance has been an important foundation in many of the discussions concerning the national and international flow of news and information. Today, the production and dissemination of information has gained so much ground in our society to the extent that more than half of the total labour force in the United States is involved in the production, dissemination or use of information in its various forms. Ohaja (2003) lends support to the above statement by stressing the fact that half of the individuals in New York City do nothing all day save the production of, the movement of, or the work with information.

The World today is rapidly becoming a global village. It has moved from being different entities living in unity to interrelated entities and still moving higher to a global village. In the past few decades, media flow from the developed countries to the developing countries has dominated the academic analyses of international media scholars. The reportage of the South in the Western media and that of the Western nations in the South's media as well as the controversy over the imbalance in the flow of news is an issue that mass communication scholars and academics have studied for years and have still not come to rest.

Proscovia (2008: 8) considers the uneven distribution/access of the internet as a contribution to the 'digital divide' despite the freedom, productivity and communication it came with. This digital divide can also be regarded as an 'information divide' stemming from the emergence of the new communication technologies (which accentuate the existing inequality and imbalance in the international media scene). Proscovia (*op. cit.*) opines that news is far from being a two-way affair. According to him, the 'conflict between the North and South over the dissemination of news is more intractable than any other contemporary debate, for it intrudes into the very culture of Western societies'.

Okigbo (1996: 285) describes the international community's means of communication as highly sophisticated and very rapid such that information can be transmitted almost immediately between territories of the world. He, however, mentions that today's world features major imbalances that reflect the overall imbalance affecting the international community. Based on the statements made by these scholars, one can denote that with the emergence of the specialized media, highly sophisticated technologies and other forms of new communication

technologies, the information gap between the Northern and Southern nations have been over-emphasized as the Southern nations do not possess this technologies that aid in the dissemination and production of information.

Uche (1996: 315) asserts that 'the demands of NWICO will definitely be emphasized with the emergence of the new information technologies as it will widen the gap between the North and South nations'. Uche (1996) observes that there are noticeable transformations in the nature of man's environment caused by modern explosion in international communication technologies, of which the communication technologies do more of catalyzing or intensifying transformations than being sole causes. This undeniably means that the emergence of new and specialized communication technologies has definitely widened the existing imbalance between the North and South nations.

The News Flow Controversy is one of the current and most topical issues in international communication today. As each decade unfolds, certain changes for communication are indicated but regardless of this, the News Flow Controversy has remained undeterred. Okunna (1993: 93) sees the rights of nations to take part in a multi-directional information flow based on equality as part of the early development in the NWICO demand. The most obvious fact is that some nations have, while others do not have. Those that are rich in the World's resources are also rich in communication and information, while those nations that are poor in resources are also deprived of communication and information (Ekeanyanwu, 2008). Developments in the Communications field show how the knowledge gaps between the information-rich and the information-poor countries have intensified over time, thereby excluding certain parts of the World from enjoying the fruits of what is referred to as 'global village'. In other words, due to the existing information gap between the North and South nations, it has invariably excluded the South from being actively involved in the production and dissemination of information.

More so, one frequent criticism is the fact that Western media reportage and news about the South focuses more on disasters and conflicts without explaining the social and political histories behind them. Godlee (2008) says events, crisis and super-power conflict are three elements news stories must include for Africa to be part of *all the news that's fit to print*- motto of the New York Times. In other words, it appears that undue emphasis has been placed on the element of crisis which denotes negativity, disaster, tragedy, etc. More statements have also been made on how the Western media use their economic and technological power to oppress the developing nations. This is what Chavis (1998: 8) had to say:

*With the stroke of a journalist's pen, the African, her continent, and her descendants are pejoratively reduced to nothing: a bastion of disease, savagery, animism, pestilence, war, famine, despotism, primitivism, poverty, and ubiquitous images of children, flies in their food and faces, their stomachs distended. These 'universal' but powerfully subliminal message units, beamed at global television audiences, connote something not good, black, foreboding sub humanity etc. On the other hand, little is said about Africa's strategic importance to so called industrialized nations; her indispensability and relevance to World development, global technology, and the wealth of nations. Even less is communicated via the media or anywhere else about the incalculable volume of African art and crafts that end up in private collections and museums.*

News Flow Controversy has for so long been examined from the perspective of the Third World nations. The way and manner the West is reported in the media of the Third World nations has generated very little or no controversy. It is important to note that the Third World nations also perpetuate imbalance towards the First World nations. Issues concerning the Western nations in the Third World media are hardly reported and even when reported, they are given very little prominence. The Third World nations are using the news values of the First World nations to evaluate their own stories. 'This implies that the Third World media are also guilty of the charges levelled against the Western press with regard to quantitative and qualitative imbalance in international news flow' (Ekeanyanwu, 2007). It is, therefore, contradictory and erroneous for the South to be complaining about their image as portrayed in the Western media when in fact they are guilty of bias, abnegation and slants in their coverage of the Western nations.

News Flow Controversy that results from imbalance has attendant effects on the social, cultural and economic sector of a nation. For the South nations, who raised the call for a New Order, the imbalance has placed them at a receiving end as they continuously receive media provisions that do not glorify their culture or their beliefs. For this purpose, the South nations are clamouring for a radical refit of the present international communication system which would reflect the diversity and equality of all human races regardless of the differences inherent. Okunna, in Ekeanyanwu (2005:194), opines that 'a lot of research evidence has been gathered over the years to demonstrate the imbalance in the quality and particularly, quantity of global mass communication. This severe imbalance, with the attendant dangers of cultural domination through mass communication, is at the root of the protracted demand for a NWICO'.

Much has been said about the call for a NWICO but what exactly does this New Order entail? As already mentioned, the imbalance and inequalities that exist in the international communication scene led to the demand of NWICO that is 'the desire to change the present pattern of global information, which favours the West and gives the Third World nations little or no chance to have their say' (Ekeanyanwu, 2005). This demand enforces a replacement of the Old Order (Imbalance) with a New Order that promotes balance, equality, cultural autonomy, control, etc. Communication scholars that were part of the team were able to identify the problems associated with the global information flow which were the free flow, one-way flow, vertical flow and marketing oriented flow.

The MacBride commission (1980) identifies the unidirectional/one-way flow of messages as a 'common concern of countries' and it is this flow that the South nations are mostly wronged and distressed about whereby it seems as if the Third World countries behave just as the foreign media projects them. Egwu (2001: 7) buttresses this point when he says:

*In recent times, international media have been dominated by notable institutions such as BBC, VOA, Radio France International, Voice of Germany, Newsweek, Times, CNN and many other satellite cable networks, mobile telephone and so on. Consistently, these media have locked Africa and Africans into a neo-colonial communication and information grid that has de-natured Africans and yoked them into the Western man's projective and perceptual needs to exploit Africa.*

Aliede (2005: 226) lends support to this fact noting that there must be one form communication or the other for human relationship or interaction to take place. All through ancient history, communication has proved to be indispensable. Communication can, thus, be defined as the transmission of information, ideas, behaviours, thoughts and culture between and among people, nations and through a medium generally known and received by everyone.

The media, the various means of mass communication, such as radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, etc., are used to disseminate information to the heterogeneous audience. The media also has enormous influence in shaping public perception and imagination of the situations around the World, because the press in every country serves as the masses window through which it views the goings-on in the country. Communication must be participatory because it involves two or more persons, groups or countries. The importance of communication cannot be undermined within and between countries. Abeh (2007: 1) plainly establishes the importance of communication in the society thus: 'every human society so called

primitive or modern, depends on communication to enable its members to live together, to maintain and modify working arrangements about the social order and social regulation and to cope with the environment'.

However, in international communication, it is not so. There are still expanding gaps of communication in both quantitative and qualitative terms between and within countries. It is a scene whereby one nation is overbearing on another country, while the victimized country ultimately remains passive. We should bear in mind that as the World becomes 'globalized', it is the primary responsibility of the mass media as a source of information to give an accurate and credible representation of the World. International communication, as Ekeanyanwu (2005: 243) notes, is supposed to be one that provides major participants the opportunity to disseminate information concerning significant news and events to the globe or as many countries as they desire thus gaining adequate knowledge of global issues. However, this ideal picture is merely admirable but impracticable.

Despite the fact that the News Flow Controversy has been in existence, tossed to and fro and bisected, the issues inherent are yet to be clearly stated. In international communication, the apogee of the News Flow Controversy came about when the Third World nations complained about some of the distressing issues in the media scene. Godlee (2008: 1) notes that 'the negative coverage of Third World affairs, the predominance of distorted news in the global scene and the quantitative imbalance in the flow of news from the Third World to the First World amongst others were the major distressing issues complained by the Southern bloc'.

Basically, the conclusions of numerous studies and media/communication scholars are that the news circulates in a deeply uneven and distorted manner and this is hinged on the fact that communication differences and domination occurs at different levels and in different forms. 'It could occur between developed and developing nations, between developed nations having same or similar ideological orientation or between Third World or South countries themselves' (Ekeanyanwu 2007).

In examining the origin, nature and causes of imbalance in global information flow, Aliede (2005) observes that the pattern of World News Flow is a miniature representation of the imbalance that affects the international community. The MacBride commission (1980) also asserts that the 'imbalances are both quantitative and qualitative and they also exist within the Third World and among developing countries themselves'. More so, the wide gap in access to technology strengthens this imbalance which is more reinforced when information is distorted by the Western countries where the information agencies are based. Aliede (2005)

identifies a link between news flow imbalance and the economic gap between the North and the South. The more frustrated the Third World is over its inability to change the international communication structure, the more increase in the gap between the well informed and the less informed.

This, therefore, means that media imperialism which is the root of cultural imperialism is the 'belief in the philosophy of colonizing and the policy of extending imperial or neo-colonial influence over the mass media of another country' (Ekeanyanwu, 2005). To this effect, owing to the fact that both the media hardware and software are chiefly produced by the developed countries, the image of the developing World is painted slanted and biased. Thus, the original accusation of the South nations is hinged on the way and manner in which they are projected in the eyes of the World or generally the 'Third World Image'. In other words, the South nations are saying that they are not projected favourably in the Western media. Uche (1996) corroborates this noting that the Eurocentric World projects Africa as a region of stagnation and/or outright retrogression stemming from past prejudice of the ancients, who either out of ignorance or reluctance failed to acknowledge that Africa had some positive achievements. He also notes that the sensational reporting trend has caused the socioeconomic achievements of independent Africa to be overlooked.

This statement depicts the rapid growth and presence of imbalance in the global arena and how the information rich countries dominate the scene. It is the general belief of the developing countries that the Western media are engaged in a propaganda campaign aimed at dominating them even after the demise of colonialism. The perceived imbalance in the North-South pattern of information flow is a subject of intense argument between the advanced states and the Third World countries. The Western World, despite the accusations, has argued that they have always mirrored the Third World in an objective, fair and balanced way.

One of the controversial issues raised in the call for the NWICO debate was the issue of 'balance' and the need for a 'free and balanced' flow of information around the World. From all indications, enough practical evidence has been brought forward to support the presence of imbalance in the international communication scene. However, there are two views about this issue. The opposing views let us have a scenario into what the Western countries have on their mind and vice versa. The Western nations are not perturbed about this issues raised in the NWICO but rather contend that as far differences abound in the socio-economic features of different countries, that imbalance and inequality will definitely thrive. Thus, while the advocates (Third World countries) of NWICO are demanding for a 'free and balanced flow' of World News and

information, the opponents (Western countries) still maintain that the flow must remain 'free and unhindered' thus advocating for a 'free flow' which is unidirectional/one way and vertical in nature. However, 'some Westerners admit the charges of imbalance but note that the Third World countries are also biased in its coverage of the rest of the World because, according to them, 'bias is characteristic of every journalism' (Ekeanyanwu, 2007: 25).

It is pertinent to note that the Western nations are clamouring for a free flow of information. The free flow is the movement of mass media messages and cultural products from one nation to another without any form of impediment or obstruction. The clamour for a free flow is based on their constitution which is predicated on the 1946 UN declaration on the freedom of information and states that 'congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of the press'. This law, which ordinarily is a positive oriented concept since it allows for the gathering and dissemination of information, has however resulted to become a flaw in global information flow. This is because much emphasis was placed on only one component of the flow to the detriment of the other. Overemphasis has been placed on the receiving aspect while the impacting aspect has been neglected. This has clearly led to the unidirectional flow of information from the North to the South as the South nations are being portrayed as mere consumers of information in whatever taste they are produced, while the North are the major producers and distributors of this information.

The question now is: should the Western nations still remain guilty of charges levelled against them when they disseminate information based on this directive from the law? The West to which the Third World nations have been pointing to puts forward a defence. Righter (1984: 84), in Aliede (2005: 223), restates the Western views point that 'its report of the Third World is backed by its libertarian nature of a "free market place of ideas" which is rooted in the belief of the freedom of the press'. In other words, the Western nations are saying that if the New Order works, it will lead to an end to the freedom of the press and lead to a destruction of the 'free flow of information'. However, Third World journalists and academics counter this statement saying that 'what the West call global "free flow of information" and news is in fact, a euphemism for the economic, political and cultural domination of developing nations by the West with the aid of its powerful transnational news agencies' (Ekeanyanwu 2007).

Another side to this debate which we shall not fully divulge into is the fact that 'statements have been made that the Western media were never guilty of wildest charges made against them and that they simply reflected universal characteristics of news around the World—attention to "exceptional" events, focus on regional and national interest, etc.' (Uche, 1996:123). These statements

were made ascertaining the fact that even though the NWICO was not able to achieve its goal of a 'free and balanced flow' of information around the World, it was still able to have a positive effect on the Western media coverage.

Ehimere (2009) charges the press with imbalance and bias in their news coverage. More so, there are data and empirical proofs to buttress the statements that the African media systems are also guilty of these charges. Ekeanyanwu (2007) observes that the percentage of foreign news in the Nigerian media at one point in time or the other tends to dominate that of local news events.

The argument that the Third World nations are also guilty of bias, abnegation in its coverage of World News is also supported with the fact that the news reports about developed nations in the Third World press are mainly political, conflict and violence oriented. Media scholars question the act of the Third World countries saying that the act of bias especially in the over-emphasis of conflict-oriented news portrayed by the South nations puts them at fault.

Ekeanyanwu (2007) undertook a study that sought to find out if the Western World is reported in the African media using the Nigerian press as a case study and his findings were quite revealing. He notes that

*Therefore we can statistically claim that the Nigerian press is not guilty of quantitative imbalance in its reportage of the Western World if compared to the other Worlds. However the same could not be said about the quality of the reportage. Available statistics from this study indicate that the Nigerian press gave more emphasis on negative or unfavorable reportage of the Western World. In addition, only these negative or unfavorable news events make their appearances in the front pages of the Nigerian press. All these point to one fact that the Nigerian press is guilty of qualitative imbalance in its reportage of the Western World.*

The compilations and findings of the various media scholars and researchers cited in this review have served to give an insight into the News Flow Controversy. It has also helped to ascertain the existence of imbalance in the World News flow as well as provide enough empirical evidence to support the widely held views that this imbalance if not resolved quickly could be a source of global conflict and would eventually widen the already existing gap between the North and South nations even with the emergence of the 'global village' community.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Some of the theories used to bisect the subject matter include Two Step flow theory, Cultural Dependency theory, International Flow of Information theory,

Agenda-setting Theory, Spiral of Silence Theory, Knowledge Gap theory, Value System hypothesis and Gatekeeping theory, etc. In a bid to give this study the needed theoretical support, the frameworks that would be considered include the Agenda-setting theory and International flow of Information model. However, the International flow of Information model forms the core of this study.

### Agenda-setting theory

Ranging from news reporting and investigative journalism to the broadcasting of soaps, drama and films, the media provide us with information, entertainment and seek to enhance our understanding of the World. Hence, in often indirect ways, the media engage with and affect our beliefs, values and fundamental commitments.

According to Folarin (2002: 95), the elements involved in agenda setting include the quantity or frequency of reporting; prominence given to the reports (via headline display, pictures and layout in news papers, magazines, film, graphics or timing on radio and television); the degree of conflict generated in the reports and cumulative media specifics over time. This denotes that the perceived value of news on either the North or South nation in the international press is determined largely by certain presentation techniques in the quality and frequency of reportage. More so, the placement of any of the nations among other continents and the way it is emphasized has a strong effect on its perceived imbalance in the international communication scene.

Odukomaiya (1992) believes that the developing countries remain adamant in their demand for NWICO partly because the agenda or reality of the media can influence audience perceptions of reality. Thus, the South nations argue that the existing Order is biased against them because the Western media which dominate international communication portray to the World, images of developing countries that are predominantly negative by showing the countries in terms of failure, violence, crisis, disaster, etc. In essence, the international media has the ability to influence the Western or Third World's media image, i.e. it has the ability to influence favourably or unfavourably how persons in the globe view the Western or African continent.

This basically means that a Western or Third World News coverage on issues relating to their counterpart nations will always be represented in the international press even though their views may be incorrect. This explains why a country can either enjoy a positive or negative media image.

### International flow of information theory

The International Flow of Information model according to Al Hester (1976: 242–250), in Ekeanyanwu

(2007), is quite relevant to this study. It postulates that

- (1) Nations are at all times arranged in hierarchies of power pecking order.
- (2) A nation's position in the hierarchy determines the type of information flow, direction and volume.
- (3) The volume of information flowing from a high order nation will be greater than that flowing in the opposite direction from the low order nations.
- (4) Those responsible for the inflow of information and communication into a nation's system would select from a myriad of messages from the outside surrounding those perceived as most useful, meaningful or rewarding to members of their own system.

From the above statement, one can denote that nations generally are arranged from the highest to the lowest whereby you have nations at the apex and others in the middle and still some others at the base position. From this we understand that the Third World nations are the in the category of the base or low-order nations and command the least power and respect in global politics, economics, trade, information and communication flows' (Ekeanyanwu, 2005). This is because these nations have not attained a high level of development and the attainment of this level determines the quantity and quality of news that would be received and expected from this region. The basis of the argument is that the Third World countries should not complain because they are still at lowest level and, therefore, deserve the least.

However, the developed Western nations are economic superpowers and because of this, they are at the peak of the hierarchy giving them the capability to receive as well as disseminate news and information. The Institute for Communication Research of Stanford University and the Institute Francais de Presse of the University of Paris jointly conducted an extensive study in 1961 on the flow of news among 13 countries in five continents. Their conclusion states that the 'World flow of foreign news deals chiefly with a group of highly developed countries which are also dominant in World politics. News flows from the highly developed to the less developed countries. It flows from Europe and North America to the other continents. It flows from the United States and the Soviet Union to all other countries'.

This statement emphasizes the fact that there is rapid growth and presence of imbalance in the global arena because the information rich countries dominate the scene. Due to the fact that these Western countries are at the peak of the hierarchy, they use this to their advantage by portraying the Third World nations in bad light. Okunna (1993: 95–96), in Ekeanyanwu (2005), confirms this by saying

that 'the developed countries of the World dominate the international flow of news largely due to the domination of the World's communication structures and resources which include news agencies, broadcast facilities amongst others'. This situation undeniably led to the emergence of the News Flow Controversy.

This statement makes us understand that the more the Third World countries are in the category of the low-order nations, the more they would be less active in the international communication scene and the more they would have an unfavorable media image. According to Ekeanyanwu (2007), 'this invariably should jolt the developing nations to start thinking of how to become an economic superpower, which will eventually transform them into information and technological superpowers and therefore catapult them to high-order nations'.

## METHOD OF STUDY

Content categories were developed for the analysis of the selected broadcast channels (CNN and Channels) which invariably formed the unit of analysis. The selection of these news channels was made purposely. Thus, the major reason of using purposive sampling technique was to meet the study objectives. The researcher selected the above broadcast organizations, representing both the North and South nations because apart from being devoted to news broadcasts 24 hours, they are known for their hardcore and candid news delivery. The scope of study was for 6 weeks. During this period, the researcher watched and analysed the coverage of World News by these broadcast channels for 30 minutes each day (Monday–Friday). For the analysis and presentation of data that were gathered from the field, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program software, one of the commonly used programs for statistical analysis in social science was used to analyse the data and present the results in tables and charts.

The population of this study consisted of all the broadcast media in the Western and Third World countries. From these, the Cable News Network (CNN) was selected for the Western nation and Channels TV for the Third World nation. These media organizations were selected because they have certain features that are unique and primary to the research objectives. The major reasons why these broadcast channels were selected include

- (1) They both offer objective reporting, constructive criticism and analysis due to the fact that they are privately owned.
- (2) They also have a wide coverage on issues of politics, economy, science and technology, sports and other matters that are of significance to the world.

- (3) They have a wide global audience reach ranging from masses to elites.
- (4) They are long standing media organizations that have stood the test of time and are thus widely known by virtually every citizen.
- (5) They have a reputation for good news delivery, high quality journalism and high calibre staff.
- (6) The researcher has easy access to these media organizations in her community.

From the study population, the researcher studied and analysed CNN and Channels coverage of World News for 30 minutes each day (Monday–Friday) for 6 weeks (2 weeks in December 2009, 2 weeks in January 2010 and 2 weeks in February 2010). Specifically, the sample size covers World reports from around the world presented by the selected broadcast channels. It covers the period of 6 weeks, i.e. 8 AM everyday for CNN 'World Report' and 5:30 PM everyday for Channels 'The World Today' which amounts to 1 hour everyday comparing and analysing the World News broadcast of the selected media channels. The choice of the sample size was made due to the availability of international/World News stories that were of major significance to Nigeria and the international community during the study period. Such issues include the Mutallab Terrorist case, the President's absence as well as the listing of Nigeria as one of the terrorist nations, etc. These stories no doubt had significant impact on the world as a whole and the study period revealed how the North and South nations would be portrayed by the selected media channels as well as how they would give an in-depth and detailed coverage of such noteworthy World News stories.

The choice of the two broadcast channels and a study period of 6 weeks daily (Monday–Friday) were purposely made. The two media channels (CNN and Channels TV) were purposely selected based on their global audience reach, accessibility, consistency and above all the fact that they offer objective reporting, constructive criticism and analysis because of their private ownership. In addition, the World News broadcast was purposely selected because it would fulfil the requirements that the study needs for analysis as regards the topic under study—'Comparative analysis of CNN and Channels coverage of World News'.

## UNIT OF MEASUREMENT OR ANALYSIS

To achieve this, content categories were developed which were classified according to divisions such as headline news, news stories, etc.

## CONTENT CATEGORIES

The content/story categories developed in this study include

- (A) **Prominence**
  - (1) *Headline News*: They are frontline stories and are considered as the most important stories of the day. They are given top priority and are reported first.
  - (2) *Other stories not mentioned in the headline*: These are news stories that are not reported first and are not given top priority.
- (B) **Frequency of coverage in terms of story type**
  - (1) *News Story*: They are straight forward and usually short brief overview on issues. They contain basic facts, are timely and objective.
  - (2) *Feature Story*: These are in-depth detailed stories in nature and are usually longer and more detailed than news stories.
  - (3) *Interpretative reports*: These are direct reports that focus on contemporary issues from analysts, journalists and experts or any person the broadcast station thinks his/her views are of value or are newsworthy.
  - (4) *Others*: This is used in this study to indicate such reports that do not belong to any of the specified story categories.
- (C) **Frequency of coverage in terms of news classification**
  - (1) *Political news and Government News*: This means news stories that focus on political issues or the activities of political parties and news on the activities of a particular government administration in a country.
  - (2) *Economic news*: This means news stories that concentrate on the state of the economy such as price inflation, IMF loans, food shortage, etc. in a country.
  - (3) *Sports news*: These are news stories that focus on sporting or recreational activities such as athletics, soccer, gymnastics, basket ball, etc.
  - (4) *Science and technology news*: These are news stories on technological inventions and breakthroughs in a science research as well as developments in the science field such as new drugs, new diseases, etc.
  - (5) *Education news*: These are news stories that focus on the activities in the educational sector of a country such as policies and challenges in the institutions, etc.
  - (6) *Human interest news*: These are news stories that do not have a serious tone but are emotional and appeal or interest members of society such as unusual births or deaths.
  - (7) *Entertainment news*: These are news stories that focus on the amusing or interesting features in a nation such as stories on music, movie stars and interesting events.

- (8) *Business news*: These are news stories that emphasize on the activities of various multinational and national corporations, industries, small enterprises in a country.
- (9) *Religious news*: These are news stories that focus on the religious activities of the different sects or denominations in a particular country. Such stories include religious crisis or religious policies.
- (10) *Crime news*: These are news stories that focus on various crimes committed from time to time in a country such as armed robbery, assassination, etc.

(D) Content in terms of the tone of the news content

- (1) *Good News*: These are news stories or reports that present either the North or South countries in a positive light. They contain issues that bother on development and growth in certain sectors of the socio-political, economic and cultural life of the nation.
- (2) *Bad News*: These are news stories that present either the North or South nations in a negative light. These news stories report damaging or destructive events, scandals, epidemics, conflicts and ultimately present the nation in a disapproving manner.

(E) Frequency of coverage in terms of geographic spread

The frequency of coverage was determined by measuring the total reports on all the other continents. Therefore, six variables representing the six continents were developed for the study. They include

- (1) Africa
- (2) Europe
- (3) North America
- (4) Asia
- (5) Australia
- (6) South America

(F) Depth of spread in terms of content

In order to determine the depth of spread in terms of content, two classifications were developed thus:

- (1) *World News*: These are news stories on a channel that has other nation's part of it or involves more than one nation. In other words, it is news about the entire nations or news that is of significance to the world at large. For example, a news story that says 'Climatic Change' or 'The emergence of the global economic crisis' is a World News.
- (2) *Local News*: These are news stories on a channel that focus on the particular country in which that channel is located or has more significance to that particular country than to the world. In other words, it bothers on

events or happenings that pertain to that particular nation from which the broadcast media is situated. For example, a story about Etteh's impeachment covered by Channels TV is local news to Nigeria—a Third World nation.

(G) Sources used in gathering the stories

In establishing the sources used in the coverage of World News by the selected media channels, the following categories were developed:

- (1) *In-house staff*: These refer to the news sources that are within the particular media organization. They include all staff employed and paid by the media organization.
- (2) *Outside sources*: These refer to the news sources that are not direct employees of the selected media organization. It could be CNN's I Report which is a form of citizens' journalism. It could also be a report sourced from another mass media or news agency.
- (3) *Unidentified sources*: These refer to sources not expressly stated in the news report, i.e. the sources used are not identified.

(H) Method of delivery

- (1) These are news stories with picture slides and other supporting devices such as voice overs, captions, etc.
- (2) These are news stories without pictures, just the news caster reading with scripts till the end of the report.

The codes for this level of analysis are presented thus

Content categories	Codes
Prominence	
Headline news	Hn
Not mentioned in the headline	Nhn
Frequency of coverage in terms of story type	
News stories	Ns
Feature	F
Interpretative reporting	Ir
Others	O
Frequency of coverage in terms of news classification	
Politics and government news	PGN
Economic news	EN
Sports news	SN
Science and technology news	STN
Education news	EDN
Human interest news	HIN
Entertainment news	ETN
Business news	BSN
Religious news	RN
Crime news	CN
Content in terms of the tone of news content	
Good news	GN
Bad news	BN

(Continues)

Content categories	Codes
Frequency of coverage in terms of geographic spread	
Africa	AF
Europe	EU
North America	NA
Asia	AS
South America	SA
Australia	AU
Depth of spread in terms of content	
World news	WN
Local news	LN
Sources used in gathering the stories	
In-house staff	IHS
Outside sources	OS
Unidentified sources	US
Method of delivery	
With supporting devices	WSD
No supporting devices	NSD

## DISCUSSION

There are two sides to every argument and two faces on a coin. Both the Third World and Western nations have laid their grievances as regards the international communication scene. However, the presentation and analysis of data generated for this study has been able to do a comparative analysis on the coverage of World News by the North and South nations using the broadcast channels as case study. From this analysis, it is evident that imbalance is a predominant feature of all media systems around the world especially in the coverage of global or international events. Each country aims at promoting its own interest instead of promoting the World's interest. In other words, it is no longer a matter of one divide being biased against the other but it is now a matter of both divides being guilty of bias and imbalance in their coverage of World News. Until this is resolved, there cannot be any significant progress in the international communication scene (Table 1).

Quantitative imbalance was also supported as reports outside the purview of where the broadcast channels are located suffer this form of imbalance in the sense that their stories constitute very few of the entire reports covered by the broadcast channels.

Table 1 A Comparative analysis of CNN and Channels Television Coverage of World News

Broadcast media channels	World News	Local/national news	Total
Channels Television	240	52	292
	50.1%	59.8%	
CNN	239	35	274
	49.9%	40.23%	
Total	479	87	566
	100%	100%	

This was evident as stories outside Africa constituted very few reports when reported by Channels TV which is a media organization in Nigeria, a Third World country. From the entire World News reports covered by Channels TV, only 12.5% constituted of stories from North America (see Tables 1 and 3). Likewise the stories outside the purview of CNN were not given quantitative coverage as only 4.2% of the entire World News coverage of CNN were stories from Africa. It should be noted that this is a very minute percentage when compared to the other total number of stories about the country from which they are located. From all indications, this is inadequate quantitatively and it shows to a large extent that the North and South nations are biased in their coverage of World News.

More so, apart from the fact that there was inadequate coverage quantitatively, available statistics from the study indicate that both broadcast stations gave more emphasis on negative or unfavourable reportage of their counterpart countries. As could be deduced, 46.7% of the stories covered in Channels TV were on political issues, such as controversies, conflicts, policies, while 10% were devoted to human interest/disaster news stories all in North America. Same can be said for the stories about Africa covered by CNN as they were devoted to political issues/controversies and crime/conflict news (see Tables 4 and 5). In addition, most of these negative or unfavorable stories make their appearance in the headlines of the World News broadcast of both channels. All these point to one singular fact that the North and South nations are guilty of imbalance and negative portrayals in their coverage of World News.

Another interesting fact is that the content of World News in terms of the tone of coverage comprises mostly bad news stories. Both broadcast channels had a high reportage of negative or bad news events compared to that of good news. As could be deduced, 54.6% of the entire World News reports constituted of bad news coverage in Channels TV, while 64.7% were negative news stories in CNN. This reinforces the fact that 'bad news' is still been reported as 'good news' in the international scene which only supports previous

Table 2 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to continents

Continent	Percentage
Europe	13.3%
North America	12.5%
Australia	2.92%
Africa	21.25%
Asia	42.1%
South America	7.92%
Total	100%
	N = 240

*Table 3 Distribution of World News on CNN according to continents*

Continent	Percentage
Africa	4.2%
Asia	47.7%
South America	13.8%
Europe	19.25%
North America	14.64%
Australia	0.42%
Total	100%
	N = 239

research findings that the South nations treat news as an oddity or bizarreness according to Western media standards of news evaluation. This then leaves us in wonder on what would happen if this continues to go on; will individuals ever hear of the good and developmental news stories rather than endless negative events occurring in countries?

In addition, this study revealed that one striking resemblance between the World News coverage of

both broadcast channels is that the depth of coverage given to World News stories is high compared to local/national news stories. While the depth of coverage of World News stories in Channels TV was 82.2%, that of CNN was 87.2%. This is a revelation and a deviation from earlier research findings that accused the North and South nations of under-reporting World News events. This act should be commended as it is evident that the world is now interested in the concern of others and not themselves alone. However, one major difference between both broadcast channels is the fact that the Third World broadcast media does not identify the sources used in reporting most of its World News events. This is not so in the reportage of local news events. Every local news event reported in Channels TV usually had the reporter proudly declaring the name of the correspondent but this is not so for most of the World News reports. The study shows that 42.9% of the entire World News report did not identify the sources of the reports, while 46.25% were attributed to outside sources which are mostly Western (see Table 6).

*Table 4 Distribution of World News on Channels TV according to news classification by geographic spread of the coverage*

News classification	Frequency of coverage in terms of geographic spread						
	Africa	Europe	North America	Asia	South America	Australia	Total
Political and government news	41.1%	37.5%	46.7%	26.7%	5.3%	28.6%	32.1%
Economic news	7.84%	3.13%	0%	5%	5.3%	0%	4.59%
Sports news	7.84%		3.13%	3.3%	0%	0%	0%
Science and technology news	2%	0%	20%	5%	0%	0%	5%
Education news	3.92%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.83%
Human interest news	5.9%	21.9%	10%	13.9%	63.2%	42.9%	17.5%
Entertainment news	2%	15.62%	13.3%	6.93%	21.1%	14.3%	9.2%
Business news	11.8%	0%	0%	8.9%	0%	0%	6.25%
Religious news	3.92%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1.67%
Crime news	13.7%	18.6%	6.7%	31.7%	5.3%	14.3%	20.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	N = 51	N = 32	N = 30	N = 101	N = 19	N = 7	N = 240

*Table 5 Distribution of World News on CNN according to news classification by geographic spread of the coverage*

News classification	Frequency of coverage in terms of geographic spread						
	Africa	Europe	North America	Asia	South America	Australia	Total
Political and government news	30%	32.7%	37.1%	28.1%	6.7%	0%	27.2%
Economic news	20%	4.35%	2.9%	5.3%	3.03%	0%	5.02%
Sports news	10%	4.35%	14.3%	1.8%	0%	0%	4.2%
Science and technology news	0%	0%	8.6%	5.3%	3.03%	0%	4.2%
Education news	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.03%	0%	0.42%
Human interest news	0%	19.6%	14.3%	9.65%	57.6%	100%	18.8%
Entertainment news	10%	17.4%	11.4%	1.8%	12.2%	0%	7.95%
Business news	0%	2.17%	2.9%	8.8%	0%	0%	5.021%
Religious news	10%	6.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.67%
Crime news	20%	13.0%	8.6%	39.5%	15.2%	0%	25.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	N = 10	N = 46	N = 35	N = 114	N = 33	N = 1	N = 239

**Table 6** Distribution of World News on CNN according to news sources

News Sources	Percentage
In house staff	10.8%
Outside sources	46.25%
Unidentified sources	42.92%
Total	100%
	N = 240

This goes a long way to confirm that the Western news agencies or the 'Big Four' dominate the sourcing and distribution of international news. This is supported by a study conducted by Uche reported in Ekeanyanwu (2005: 274):

*We are also bothered by the alarming rate of dependency on foreign news sources by the Nigerian press, despite their vociferous stance and agitational editorials that supported the UNESCO led attack for a New World Information and Communication Order. Their dependence on the Western media for much of their news stories made nonsense of their country's stance on structure that would guarantee equity and fairness in news coverage.*

However, this cannot be said for the World News coverage of CNN as most of the reports were mostly identified when outside sources are used. The results showed that CNN had 0.412% of unidentified sources, while most of their World News stories were from in-house sources.

The findings of this study also revealed that the Asia continent received the greatest coverage by both broadcast channels and this was because of the major crisis and conflicts happening in most of the countries in that continent during the study period (see Tables 7 and 8). Some other continents like Australia also suffer quantitative imbalance with regard to the number of stories covered in the World News report of the broadcast channels.

Summing up this discussion, Ekeanyanwu (2007) asserts that 'Imbalance in the flow of World News is a feature of almost all media systems around the world and no media system of any country is

**Table 8** Distribution of World News on CNN according to tone by geographic spread

Continents	Good news	Bad news	Total
Africa	32.1%	12.2%	21.25%
Europe	13.8%	13%	13.3%
North America	14.7%	10.7%	12.5%
Asia	31.2%	51.1%	42.1%
South America	7.34%	8.4%	7.92%
Australia	0.912%	4.6%	2.92%
Total	100%	100%	100%
	N = 109	N = 131	N = 240

competent enough or has the moral rectitude or right to accuse the other of imbalances'. The study has proven that to a large extent, news circulates in a deeply uneven and distorted manner as both the North and South nations are guilty of imbalances, bias and abnegation in the coverage of world events. Thus, the issues raised in the NWICO debate will continue to hunt the Third World countries in their coverage of World News if they do not curb their continuous dependence on the Western countries as well as the Western nations if they do not set the right agenda of development for these Third World countries.

It is important to point out here that the Western attitude towards the Third World countries is on the basis of capitalism. The capitalist phenomenon is one that encourages competition and the desire to imperialize and dominate the developing world. This issue has since been a key communication issue around the globe, spear-headed by UNESCO and proposed by the Third World nations. In the literature review, it was stated that the Western media have not given due reportage, especially quantitatively, to the Third World countries and as a result, there are distorted views and misconceptions of developing countries. Nevertheless, the Third World countries are also not left out as they too are bias in their news coverage and would rather promote their interest rather than that of their counterpart nations. They are also staunch followers of the Western's standard of news evaluation based on oddity, bizarre news events and political controversies rather than developmental issues. Thus, the cries of imbalance against the Western nations are also misplaced and unjustified and until the news evaluation standards is re-considered, the issues of imbalance will remain undeterred.

Ironically, these Third World nations that are strong advocates of a balanced flow of information and who clamour for a radical refit of the present international communication system are also guilty of the bias that they accuse the Western nations of. Furthermore, the fact that the Third World media rely on foreign news sources without identifying them in most of the cases also shows that they are highly dependent on the Western nations for their

**Table 7** Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to tone by geographic spread

Continents	Good news	Bad news	Total
Africa	3.85%	4.35%	4.2%
Europe	20.5%	18.6%	19.25%
North America	26.9%	8.7%	14.64%
Asia	35.9%	53.5%	47.7%
South America	12.8%	14.3%	13.81%
Australia	0%	0.62%	0.42%
Total	100%	100%	100%
	N = 78	N = 161	N = 239

information and communication needs and this is what basically causes imbalance. The question now is: 'If the North and South nations are both guilty of the same crime, then who is to be blamed for the imbalances in the international communication scene since both world divides portray their counterparts in a wrong light? Unless this situation changes and the North and South nations work on their lapses, cries of imbalance will continue to be heard until eternity.

The presentation, analysis and discussion of the data and results largely answered the research questions as well as helped to satisfy the study objectives. The analyses of the answers to the research questions are presented below.

### RESEARCH QUESTION 1

*How often does news about Africa appear in the World News broadcast of First World nations (The West)?*

Table 3 clearly shows that to a large extent, news about Africa does not appear often in the World News broadcast of the Western nations. In other words, CNN was guilty of quantitative imbalance when it comes to covering Africa. The data showed that out of the entire World News reports, only 4.2% of the reports came from Africa. This proves that Africa nations when compared to Western nations are not adequately reported. Some of the few incidents that the Western nations capitalized on were the: 'Attempted Terror attack on Christmas day', 'the political instabilities in Nigeria as regards the absence of the president for almost two months', 'the conflicts, wars in Jos, etc. These incidents never left the watchful eye of the Western media and this explains why the world has a distorted conception of Africa because it has been labelled as the 'dark continent where nothing works'. Based on this data, African nations are under reported in Western media.

### RESEARCH QUESTION 2

*How often does news about the First World nations (The West) appear in the World News broadcast of Third World nations?*

As could be deduced from Table 2, the Western nations are under reported in the Third World media. This is because out of the entire World News reports, the Western nations put together only got 28.72%. The Western world in this study is operationalized to mean just the few advanced countries of Western Europe, Britain, Germany and United States of America. From all indications, this is not adequate quantitatively and it shows that the Third World nations do not report the Western nations adequately. The interesting thing is that the Third World nations at the end of the day still

depend on foreign news sources which are majorly owned by the Western nations but still cry that the Western nations portray them in a bad light when in fact that they are guilty of the same accusations they lay against the Western nations. The Third World media was very quick in giving their country quantitative coverage as the coverage given to Africa, 21.25% by Channels TV, cannot be compared to the coverage given to each of the Western nations mentioned above.

### RESEARCH QUESTION 3

*How do the Western broadcast stations portray the Third World countries in the global scene and vice versa?*

In determining how the Western and Third World nations are portrayed in the global scene by their counterparts media, two units of analysis (News Classification and Prominence) were used to assess the packaging of news. Based on the research findings in Tables 4 and 5 and Tables 9 and 10, it was revealed that the Western media do not portray Africa in good light. The Western media focused majorly on political crisis, human interest issues such as natural disasters and unusual deaths as well as crime related incidents neglecting major development sectors such as the Economic, Education and Science and Technology sectors in Africa. Even when these developmental issues were mentioned, they were not given adequate prominence as they were not mentioned in the headline. The packaging of news as regards Africa by the Western media clearly shows that they are reported in bad light which only reinforces the belief that Africa is the 'dark continent' where nothing but only conflict and crisis prevails.

Furthermore, in determining the portrayal of the Western nations in the Third World media, the same inferences from the above can be made. The Third World media are guilty of both quantitative and qualitative news coverage regarding the Western nations. The Western nations were not given a

Table 9 *Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to prominence attached*

Continents	Prominence attached		
	Headline news	Not mentioned in headline	Total
Africa	22.9%	20%	21.25%
Europe	14.3%	13%	13.3%
North America	13.3%	11.9%	12.5%
Asia	40%	43.7%	42.1%
South America	9.52%	6.67%	7.92%
Australia	0%	5.2%	2.92%
Total	100%	100%	100%
	<i>N</i> = 105	<i>N</i> = 135	<i>N</i> = 240

Table 10 Distribution of World News on CNN according to prominence attached

Continents	Prominence attached		
	Headline news	Not mentioned in headline	Total
Africa	5%	3.4%	4.2%
Europe	12.5%	26.1%	19.25%
North America	17.5%	11.8%	14.64%
Asia	52.5%	42.9%	47.7%
South America	12.5%	15.13%	13.81%
Australia	0%	0.84%	0.42%
Total	100%	100%	100%
	N=120	N=119	N=239

favourable image as the news reports focused majorly on human interest, bizarre events, political and entertainment issues that also portrayed the countries in an unfavorable way. This shows that the Third World media also neglect other necessary and important sectors of the Western nations. More so, apart from the fact that the issues reported about the Western nations were not given top prominence, the dominant story type used in presenting the issues were in the news story format. This demonstrates to a certain extent that the Third World media may not consider it to their advantage to talk about the Western nations, or do not consider her of great importance enough to talk about or analyse some pertinent issues occurring in the countries.

In summary, both the Western and Third World nations use the Western standards of news evaluations in their coverage of World News which explains why emphasis is placed on odd or bad news stories. Thus, this pattern or slant that the Western countries are usually accused of is the same pattern the Third World media is also practicing.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION 4

*What are the similarities and differences in how the North and South gather and disseminate World News?*

Tables 2 and 3 and Tables 6 and 11 clearly answer this question as the result showed that the underlying similarity between both broadcast

Table 11 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to news sources

News sources	Percentage
In house staff	61.1%
Outside sources	38.5%
Unidentified sources	0.42%
Total	100%
	N=239

channels is the fact that they promote the interest of their country in the coverage of World News rather than a true world interest. More so, there was a high coverage of World News by both broadcast channels. In other words, both broadcast channels strive to provide the audience with news reports from across the world since the programme focuses on World News coverage. While the depth of coverage of World News stories compared to local/national news stories in Channels TV was 82.2%, that of CNN was 87.2%. This point of similarity should be commended as it shows that the media channels are interested in giving adequate coverage of World events. Another major point of similarity between the broadcast channels is in the method of delivery used in presenting the stories. Both channels were able to present their stories with picture slides and other supporting devices. While Channels TV had 79.8% of their news stories packaged with supporting devices, CNN had 86.1% of their stories with supporting devices such as voice overs, captions, picture slides, etc. This act displayed by the broadcast channels should also be commended.

Notwithstanding these similarities, the major point of divergence between the broadcast channels is that the Third World broadcast media do not identify the sources used in reporting most of their stories as well as depend on outside sources especially the foreign news sources in the reportage of some of their stories (see Tables 6 and 11). This shows that the Third World media do not have the needed resources as well as adequate correspondents to cover these stories around the world and are even ashamed to identify the sources of the stories. This is not so in the reportage of local news events. Amazingly, every local news event reported in Channels TV usually had the reporter stating the name of the correspondent at the end of the report, but this never happened for most of the World News reports. According to Ekeanyanwu (2007), 'this is unethical and unprofessional because source identification adds to the veracity and authenticity of a story'. On the other hand, this cannot be said for the World News coverage of CNN as most of the reports were internally sourced and identified when outside sources are employed.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION 5

*What is the content of World News broadcast in the selected news channels?*

Based on the research findings, Tables 12 and 13 show that the content of World News broadcast in the selected channels were 'Bad news' reports. While this accounts for 54.6% of the World News reports covered in Channels TV, CNN had 67.4% reportage of 'bad news reports' in their World News broadcast. Judging from this, it means that these

**Table 12 Distribution of World News on Channels Television according to the tone of coverage**

Tone of news content	Percentage
Good news	45.42%
Bad news	54.6%
Total	100%
	N = 240

**Table 13 Distribution of World News on CNN according to the tone of coverage**

Tone of news content	Percentage
Good news	32.64%
Bad news	67.4%
Total	100%
	N = 239

selected channels are concerned with reporting damaging or destructive events images, conflicts and crisis compared to reportage of developmental issues or 'good news'. In fact, the bad news stories constitute the highest news reported in the World News broadcast of the selected channels.

From this analysis, it can be deduced that the media channels are not setting the right agenda for the World and continue to dent the image of their counterpart nations. This amounts to qualitative imbalance and implies that the term 'bad news is good news' is highly adhered to by these media channels.

## RESEARCH QUESTION 6

*Are issues of imbalance, abnegation, bias, etc. still part of World News broadcast of the selected stations?*

This answer cannot be debated as from the analysis in Tables 2 and 3; there is no gainsaying that issues of imbalance, bias are still part of World News broadcast of both the North and South countries. Apart from the fact that both countries are portrayed in a negative light by their counterpart nations, both media channels also strive to promote their interest rather than a true World interest. For example, Channels TV covered 21.25% issues on the Africa continent, while they covered just 12.5% on the North America continent where some of the Western nations are.

Likewise, CNN covered just 4.2% on the Africa continent, while they covered 14.64% on the North American continent. This picture shows that without any doubt, the selected stations were biased in covering the world as they favoured the countries that were more significant to them than the others

that were not significant to them. The study also revealed that for both media channels, major emphasis is given to politics and government news, while other important stories bothering on education, health and economy were neglected. More so, it was discovered that in CNN, news on small countries with no political, economic and technological power was given little prominence. In sum, the issues earlier identified in the NWICO debate, such as bias and abnegation in the international scene, are very much present in the World News broadcast of the selected stations.

## RESEARCH QUESTION 7

*Which continent receives adequate and inadequate coverage in terms of both quantity and quality, in the World News broadcast of the selected stations?*

Tables 7 and 8 effectively answer this question as it clearly shows that while Africa and the Asia continent had adequate quantitative coverage, the rest of the continents suffered quantitative imbalance in Channels TV. As for CNN, the results showed that Asia, North America and Europe continents had adequate quantitative coverage. Nevertheless, in bringing the total reports covered by both the North and South nations, one would observe that Asia gets the lion share in World News coverage despite the fact that most of these stories reported about them were negative stories. This again highlights the qualitative imbalance which most of the scholars have pointed out in earlier studies.

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study sought to critically examine the News Flow Controversy by comparing and analysing the coverage of World News in the different world divides using the broadcast stations as a case study. In other words, it brought to light the image of Africa as portrayed in the Western media as well as the image of the Western countries as portrayed in Third World media. From the literature, it was emphasized that the international communication scene was characterized by imbalances and inadequate reportage of countries, especially the Third World countries. Accordingly, it was discovered in this study that both the Western and Third World nations are guilty of these imbalances and biases in their coverage of World News. The findings also revealed that each media channel seeks to promote its group and even vital news classifications, such as science and technology, economy and education, are neglected for trivial News Classification that have nothing to do with the development of the countries.

In addition, other related literature were reviewed on the subject and specific mass communication theories, such as Agenda Setting theory and International Flow of Information theory, formed a strong basis for this study. The literature revealed that news flows in a lopsided manner from the highly developed to the less developed countries. It also uncovered the fact that the Third World nations that accused the Western nations of imbalance, gross misrepresentations and bias in the flow of global news are also guilty of these allegations. Content analysis was used to critically investigate the World News coverage of the selected broadcast channels (CNN and Channels TV) and this is because it is a reliable and valid method of carrying out research on media representation of particular countries. The sample size for the study was 6 weeks World News broadcast of the two selected stations. The method of study was discussed in detail and with this content categories were developed. The data collected from the field were analysed and used to answer all the research questions of the study.

The researcher found out that the issues raised in the early days of the News Flow Debate are still inherent in the coverage of World News in the different world divides. This was proved as the Western media reported more of Asia, North America and Europe in their World News coverage, while the Third World media reported more of Asia and Africa in their World News coverage and even depended on the foreign sources for the coverage of World News. This established the fact that imbalance is a common trait of all media systems around the world and no media channel is left out of this. More so, the result of the study emphasized that it is the responsibility of the media channels to give quantitative and qualitative news coverage to countries regardless of whether they are small countries with no political and technological power because they could have important and beneficial achievements.

Finally, after data analysis which involved content analysis and presentation, there is no doubt that the data collected have been able to answer the research questions and achieve the study objectives.

## CONCLUSION

That there is less than perfect equality in the coverage of news among the international media is not surprising. However, what is regularly open for debate is the belief that the developed world is constantly biased against the Third World countries. A point often ignored is that the Third World countries are probably equally biased against the developed world too.

From the analysis, it was obvious that the findings of the study supported the argument and other

related literature that both the North and South nations are guilty of bias and imbalance in their World News coverage. This is proved by the fact that importance was not placed on the developmental/good news stories in their counterpart nations but was placed on 'bad news' of political crises, conflicts, wars and disasters which are most of the times overblown and exaggerated. It was also shown that the dominant format, which is news story usually employed by the Third World media in reporting about the Western nations, shows that they do not consider her of great importance enough to talk about or analyse some pertinent issues occurring in the countries.

Furthermore, the study revealed that there was inadequate qualitative coverage of countries that were counterpart of the selected media channels. The study also supported the view that the Third World media is still dependent on Western news sources for most of their World News reports. More so, the World News coverage of the Western media proves that they have not given the Third World countries the kind of attention and publicity she requires. A look at the findings of the study and other similar studies conducted shows that imbalance is a reality and a prevalent feature of all media systems. In fact, its existence in the international communication scene and everything we do cannot be denied.

In conclusion, it is therefore necessary that there be a re-evaluation of the News Flow Controversy but this time with relevant and current facts about the level and nature of imbalance occurring in the North and South nations as well as an in-depth revisit on their media, socio-economic and political system in order to arrive at a better and permanent solution for the issue of imbalance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been suggested as a contribution to the intense debate on News Flow Controversy. These recommendations are also directed to media practitioners, leaders of the North and South nations as well as scholars so as to influence the quantity and quality of World News coverage. They include the following.

First and foremost is that the North and South nations must acknowledge the fact that imbalance is a prevalent feature of all media systems whether press, broadcasting, films and this imbalance results from the fact that the there is a wide gap between the developed and developing nations. This gap will continue to grow as long as the Third World nations continuously depend on the products of the Western nations.

Secondly, there is a need for a re-evaluation and reviewing of news evaluation standards. According

to Ekeanyanwu (2005: 281), 'as long as the Western standards of news evaluation are used the world over, the so-called "imbalance" will continue to exist in all the media systems that use such standards'. In this vein, for there to be any significant change in the international communication scene, there must first be a reviewing of the news values because the media are supposed to agents of developmental change and until they take this responsibility serious, the imbalance cries could go on forever.

In addition, for the Third World nations to curb the continuous dependence on foreign news sources in their news coverage, there should be an adoption of new Communication Technologies as well as an adequate improvement on their infrastructural facilities. This will help provide a self-reliant communication capacity for them. Also, constant training of personnel should accompany the adoption of these communication technologies and reporters designated to foreign countries should have the benefit of language training and acquaintance with the history, institutions, politics, economics and cultural environment of the country in which they are reporting so that the Third World countries would be independent and reduce their constant dependence on Western news sources.

This leads to the next recommendation which applies to the developing nations and that is the fact that the Third World countries should properly understudy the operations of the 'Big Four' news agencies who dominate the international communication scene. The aim of this is to find out what sets them apart and makes them preferred amongst others so that the Third World countries can independently source for their news and thus be able to give an adequate coverage of the World.

Due to the fact that underdevelopment has remained the primary concern and the root cause of the imbalance call by the South nation, it is therefore imperative that the developed nations and the industrialized world invest in the industrialization of the Third World countries. 'The Western nations should team up with these countries for the development of industries, technologies, information and communication systems that will depend on locally sourced materials as economic power can only be achieved in massive industrialization' (Uche, 1996: 315–316). This is bound to stop the one-way traffic in international trading which is what encourages dependence.

Finally, for the NWICO debate to progress, the South nation has to take her pride of place economically because without economic power, the flow between the North and South nations will continue to be flawed. There is simply no way one can talk about imbalance in international communication to a hungry media professional, his mind is simply based on satisfying his hunger. Therefore, the South nations should be more interested in

eradication of poverty, provision of employment opportunities as well as promoting the production of simple, cheap equipment, which would be within their reach and better suited to satisfying their immediate need. The adoption of these recommendations if followed by the Western and Third world nations will go a long way in addressing the issues raised in the NWICO debate.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The News Flow Controversy cannot be exhausted in all its ramifications in this particular study. Further research should be carried out in the following aspects.

Studies should be carried out to measure the level of reportage of Third World nations and the news flow scene of the radio stations in the West and vice versa.

Also, the activities of broadcast stations in countries such as Arabia, China, etc., can be further examined to find out more on the current level of reportage on the North and South.

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