

ISSN: 1597-4324

International Journal OF COMMUNICATION

An Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication Studies

Number Seven, December 2007



Published by the Communication Studies Forum (CSF)
Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

GLOBAL NEWS FLOW CONTROVERSY: IS THE SOUTH ALSO GUILTY?

34

EKEANYANWU NNAMDI TOBECHUKWU

ABSTRACT

Communication is so vital in our lives that it could be regarded as one of the characteristics of living organisms. It is a necessary condition for education, socialization, understanding, cooperation and even confrontation. At the international level, it is an effective tool of diplomacy. The closing years of the 20th century and the early years of this century could be described as the "information age". Ironically, copious information does not necessarily mean effective or efficient communication, or is balanced or equitable flow implied. As a reflection of the general imbalance in both human and natural resources, the flow of world news and information is slanted both at the national and international levels to favour the rich nations against the poor nations. This imbalance has given rise to the ever-burgeoning debate on the News Flow Controversy. This study, therefore, seeks to find out how the western world is reported in an Africa media using the Nigerian Press as a case study. The primary objective of the study is to ascertain if the African media systems are also guilty of distortion and bias in the treatment of news about the West. The findings showed that of all the accusations leveled against the Western media, the Nigerian press is mainly guilty of qualitative imbalance. The findings further revealed that the Nigerian media still depend heavily on western media sources for its news and information notwithstanding its vociferous stand on the news flow debate. In all, the study concluded that the Nigerian Press is also guilty of distortion, abnegation and bias in the reportage of the western world. In view of the foregoing, it has been recommended that "imbalance" should be accepted as a major feature of all media systems in the world and that rapid industrialization of Third World economies should be pursued vigorously so as to have meaningful change. A new model of international communication relations was also proposed as part of the recommendations.

KEYWORDS: News Flow Controversy (NFC), Imbalance. The Western Media, African Media Systems and Nigerian Press.

INTRODUCTION

The News Flow Controversy (NFC) is

perhaps the most topical issue in international communication today. It is also one of the major debates in the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The controversy is basically about the demand by the South for a change in the present pattern of news flow between her countries and that of

the North. The South countries are known as Third World or the underdeveloped or developing countries of the world while the North is regarded as the First World or developed countries of the West USA, France, and Britain etc.

The history of the debate on the New World Information and Communication Order is traceable to about hundred years ago when the present industrialized nations of Western Europe arrived on the shores of the Third World countries of Africa, Latin America, and Asia etc. to colonize them. Colonization of the Third World nations according to Lawal (1997:8) was, however, preceded by imperialism, which as a concept of political economy is a combination of political and economic structures and relations in Africa and other continents between 1880s and 1906. In Marxist thought, imperialism represented a stage of capitalist development that spanned over one hundred years. According to Lenin (1975:104-5), imperialism was a means adopted by European nation-states to create colonies and privileged positions in foreign markets; to monopolize protected sources of materials and opportunities for profitable exploitation of labour. Brown (1976: 22) also says that imperialism involves an idea of one nation or people seeking to dominate another for exploitation. In the process, the dominant party accumulates capital at the expense of the exploited party.

After the collapse of imperialism in 1900, colonialism was adopted as a concept that

described the resultant complex of political and economic controls imposed on dependencies (Encyclopedia Americana Vol. 7, p.298). Notwithstanding the change of concept and method, the objective of exploitation and underdevelopment was vigorously adhered to. Colonialism, therefore, is the policy of having and retaining colonies, especially of keeping them dependent for exploitative tendencies (Ekeanyanwu, 2005).

Africa was carved into colonies and protectorates through forces of arms with definite boundaries that separated various ethnic groups. Thus African kingdoms, empires and peoples were deprived of their freedom and independence. Henceforth, the colonial authorities decided how Africa would be ruled, how their society would be organized and their economic resources exploited. Each one State was given a common central government, a common national capital city, a common national name, a common official language, currency and other common institutions. These served as the basis for citizenship.

There is no doubt that African economies radically were transformed from subsistence stage to the market economy especially through the gradual process of integration into the world market. Essentially, cash crop farming was encouraged by propaganda, offer of good prices and provision of transport facilities. However, it must be noted that the construction of infrastructure, which attracted European capital and technology, were not primarily for the development of the colonies, but for the promotion of western capitalism

(Rodney, 1972:21). Thus, by such transport facilities, European traders were able to reach the interior of each colony to procure available agricultural, mineral and forest resources. These were shipped to Europe and North America to feed their factories to manufacture various consumable items, which were brought into the colonies for sale. The cost of these imports were, however, higher than what the Europeans paid for the raw materials from African producers. Hence, the terms of trade were unfavourable to the colonies, as they were unable to bargain or negotiate prices with the European firms. To a very large extent, the inflexible policies of unequal exchange and international division of labour and the subsequent trade in human beings known as the slave trade which also epitomized the world order of that period, consistently promoted the industrial development of North America and Europe at the expense of Africa.

Colonization of African countries also offered people the opportunity to acquire western education. However, Ake (1981:72-4) states that the type of education that Africans received was inferior to the type in Europe. Akintoye (1976:11) captures this vividly when he states thus:

Africans were not taught the sciences, philosophy, law and medical sciences. Instead, the approved curricula consisted of sewing, needlework, carpentry, arithmetic, health

sciences, civics and religious studies. The African, rather than being skilled or semiskilled, remained unskilled.

This created further disadvantages for the African to emancipate herself and her people. This created a wide gulf between the African and the European in all facets of life.

From the foregoing, the colonial powers in concert devised various means of exploiting their respective African colonies to sustain the economic growth and development of their own countries. Agba (2002:258) vividly captures the scenario thus:

One of the major consequences of the colonization of the Third World is the yawning gap in the levels of development between the developing and developed worlds. Countries of the North (the Western countries of Europe and North America) carted away much of human and natural resources of the countries of the South (Third World countries). Consequently, while the industrialized world used the ill-gotten resources it siphoned from the developing world to build up wealth and boast development in its areas, the developing countries were left to rust with abject poverty and economic retrogression. In other words, while countries in the Northern hemisphere were feeding their economies with the loot from the southern

hemisphere, those countries of the South were made to depend on the North for their survival.

This scenario continued until around the middle of the 20th century when decolonization started. Notwithstanding the political decolonization of Africa, the emergent independent African states still remained economically dependent on the former colonial powers. Agba (2002:258) further observes that:

Even after the colonialist had relinquished, though, partially, their hold of the Third World countries by way of granting them political independence, the colonial powers further created a relationship whereby they still had an exploitative influence over their former colonies. This amounts to a dangerous but subtle form of colonization described as neocolonialism.

Neocolonialism as a concept connotes a complex device or method of indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical forces within and outside each African state. The economic forces included continuing economic dependence on the former colonial powers, integration into former colonial economic blocs; economic infiltration of agents of former colonial powers through capital

investment, loans, aid, unequal concessions and finances directly controlled by former colonial powers. These situations have made Africa to continuously suffer the colossal disadvantages of unequal exchange and world division of labour and also, remain perpetually dependent on the North. Furthermore it is believed that the level of economic development of a country largely determines the level of development in other spheres of politics, defense, science and technology. Consequently, the economic empowerment of the countries of the North has, therefore been seen as responsible for their advancement in all facets of life including information and communication. Armed with their various communication technologies, the industrial world controls the international flow of news and information. News is slanted in favour of the western countries in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

As noted earlier, the NFC is one of the debates in the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). One may ask therefore, what the NWICO is all about? According to Traber (1985:ii), one of the starting points in the demand for NWICO was the right of nations to participate in a multidirectional flow of information on the basis of equality. At the commencement of the NWICO debate, this equality was completely lacking in the international information system which was some or less a one-way flow of media materials from the developed capitalist and information rich nations of the North to the developing, information poor nations of the South. To this end, according to Okunna (1993:93-4), "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”.

In the closing years of 29th century the concerns of international scholarship were the management of world resources and the equitable redistribution of the collective wealth of nations. The most obvious fact is that some nations have enormous resources while others do not. Those that are rich in the world resources are also rich in communication and information development while those nations that are poor in resources are seriously disadvantaged. It is not surprising therefore, that the prevailing intellectual concerns for equity in global resource management and redistribution have lent much weight to the controversy about information imbalance (Okigbo, 1996).

The global News Flow Controversy is also traceable to the monopolistic grip which the “Big Four” transnational news agencies Reuters, United Press International, Associated Press and Agence France Presse, all in the West, have on information sourcing and distribution globally. They have various technological and economic resources with which to gather all kinds of information and news from all nook and crannies of the globe and distribute them globally almost instantaneously at a very minimal cost (Agba, 2000). Thus, only the advanced countries have the means for conveniently collecting global

information, even from the shores of the developing nations, repackaging it and relaying to all parts of the globe. Since the developing countries cannot afford the resources needed for floating such domineering transnational news agencies of their own, they have no options but to accept what they get from these powerful transnational news agencies and their new technology of satellite transmission that serves as agents to the western world to exercise unchallenged control of global environmental surveillance.

The foregoing has been responsible for the controversy in the flow of world news and the persistent call by the South for a change. However, some progress has been made in these regards. According to Agba (2002:259):

The most important result or outcome of the whole debate is the wider recognition of the implicit flaw in the “free flow” ideology. Added to this is the recognition of the fact that in the present day world preconditions have to be created for the implementation of real free flow of information if a general principle is not to continue as an advantage for the few and a detriment for many at both national and international levels.

The state of the debate on the NFC still leaves much to be desired. Despite the seemingly, hopeful development and proposals in the debates, there are warning signs that indicated how difficult it will be to transform,

generalize and put into practice the free flow of information philosophy. However, other efforts made by the South to correct the imbalance in news and information flow led to the formation of some regional movements and bodies. These movements include the North-South Dialogue, South-South Cooperation and the Group 15 (G.15).

The agitations of the Third World (South) on imbalances and the First World (North) responses to the agitations are referred to as the Dialogue while South South Cooperation and Group 15 are strategies for consultation, cooperation and solidarity among countries of the South, aimed at reducing their economic, political and communication dependence on the North (Nwosu, 1997).

Apart from the activities of these movements aimed at correcting the identified imbalances, Heads of State of the Non-Aligned Nations and some world leaders have made pronouncements also aimed at correcting the imbalances. Agba (2002) again compiled some of these pronouncements when he cites the fifth conference of Head of State of Non-Aligned countries in Columbia where it was agreed that: "independent development of information sources is as important as self sufficiency in technological development because dependence in the field of information is an obstacle to political and economic progress". However, the topic under discussion is not just about the news flow controversy per se. It is about the reportage of the Western World in the

Nigerian press in correlation to the debate.

The Nigerian press, which will only include newspapers published in Nigeria by Nigerians in this study, is pointing accusing fingers at the West in the way and manner it reports the South. Another twist has also been added to the debate on the news flow controversy. There are data or empirical evidence to support the contention that the African media systems are also guilty of the accusations they have leveled against the West in the report of foreign news. In a study by Nwuneli *et al* (1982:24), it was discovered that the Nigerian media devoted 50% of their total news to local events and over 50% of its space allocated to foreign news to African region while allocating only 24% space to their Third World countries outside Africa, and the remaining 26% to the developed nation. It is also argued that the Nigerian media show more interest in some selected parts of the world, notably Africa, the Middle East, Western Europe and United States of America than others. The arguments is also supported with the fact that the news reports about the developing countries that appear in the Nigerian press are mainly political conflicts, wars, negotiations for arms, violence and crime (Oso, 1978:29).

The presupposition about these conflicting and related views on the global news flow debate is that communication disparities and domination occur at different levels and in different forms. It could occur between developed and developing nations, between developed nations having the same or similar ideological orientation and between

Third World or South countries themselves. Therefore, it is ironical and morally wrong for Nigerians and other Third World nations to accuse the West of quantitative and qualitative imbalance in the flow of world news, while in fact the Nigerian and the Third World press publish mostly local news and give little attention to world news and events from the West.

THE PROBLEM

The news flow controversy when properly analyzed will be seen to 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. The controversy arose because the Third World countries have accused the western world press of bias in its reportage of the region. Research has also shown that Third World's grievances are not unfounded.

On the other hand, the way and manner the West is reported in the media of the Third World nations has generated very little or no controversy at all. What exist are mere assumptions and academic conjectures. This angle, which has been overlooked, will be the focus of this study because there are indications to show that the Nigerian press may actually be guilty of the same offence the western press has been accused of committing.

Therefore, is the Nigerian press really guilty of bias reporting of the western world? If they are, to what extent are they guilty and in what area(s)? These questions, the

attempt to answer them and the controversy they generate in the news flow debate form the problem of this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Generally, the objective of this study is to find out if the South's media [like the Nigerian press] is also guilty of distortion and bias in the way and manner it reports news about the western world. Specifically, the objectives will include:

1. To determine the frequency of news reported about the western world in the Nigerian press.
2. To determine the level of importance the Nigerian press attaches to news about the western world.
3. To determine the sources of the news stories or reports.
4. To recommend a new model of international communication that will constructively contribute to the debate on news flow controversy and instill the desired global understanding and co-operation.

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the problem and objectives of this study, the following questions have been formulated to guide the researcher:

1. To what extent does the Nigerians press reports news about the western world?
2. Which type of news classification has the highest frequency in the Nigerian press?
3. What is the level of importance placed on these news stories or reports?
4. How does the Nigerian press get

its news or reports about the western world?

5. Is the Nigerian press guilty of imbalance in their coverage/reportage of the western world?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since the beginning of the debate on the global flow of news and information, research efforts have been concentrated on how the western world media reports Africa or how Africa reports itself. Little or nothing is empirically known about how a developing nation's press like the Nigerian press reports the western world or how news about the western world is treated in the media of a developing nation. This angle has always been overlooked and has generated little or no controversy at all. This angle will be the main focus of this study and will open up the other side of the debate. Here, lies the uniqueness of the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study on the Global News Flow Controversy cuts across so many theoretical models in communication studies. Some of these models include Intercultural Communication Model, International Flow of Information Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, Media Imperialism Hypothesis, Cultural Dependency Theory, and Peripheral Theory, knowledge Gap Hypothesis, Value System Hypothesis, Libertarian and Social Responsibility Press Theories etc.

This configuration of theoretical

frameworks is of course, due to the nature of the research problem, which also cuts across these competing and related theories. For this study, however, the International flow of Information model and Value System Hypotheses will be discussed in details so as to help us comprehend the literature review.

The International Flow of Information model according to AL Hester (1976:242-250) citing in Ekeanyanwu (2005) is quite relevant to this study. He postulates that:

1. *Nations are at all times arranged in hierarchies of power or 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 nation;*
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.*

In this pecking order of information flow analysis, Haule (1984:110) also cited in Ekeanyanwu (2005), as might be expected, classifies Africa, South of the Sahara into the category of low-order nations that command the least power and respect in global politics, economics, trade, information and communication flows. The argument of the proponents of this model is that Africa and other developing nations get

what they deserve in the global flow of news and information because their level of development determines the quantity and quality of news and information that should be expected from the region. With this model in mind, there is no doubt that the developed capitalist nations of Europe and North America are aware of the inherent flaw in the current flow of global news and information and are doing very little to change the situation.

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.

In his theory to support that the value system is a determinant variable in global information/news flow, Uche (1985:14) argues as follows:

1. *The contents of information originating from any given society at any given time is essentially the values of that country upon which its ideology is developed;*
2. *The messages of the media will always reflect the socio-economic and politico-cultural values of their societies;*
3. *The views of the North and South on the contents of, and equity in international information are either objective or subjective, depending on the values and ideologies of their area;*
4. *There will always be a conflict of interest between international and national values as long as the media exist to*

primarily transmit the values of different societies and culture.

This framework of analysis introduces another angle to the controversy - that the value system of any nation is a determinant variable in the flow of global news and information to and from such a society or nation. Consequently, socio-cultural and ideological leanings and considerations also affect the flow of news and information globally. This angle will be further discussed in the literature review.

The antecedent to the call for a New World Information and Communication Order, popularly referred to as NWICO and which is one of the basic issues in the News Flow Controversy (NFC), centres around the view by the South that the existing order is unfavourable and unacceptable to them. Though it is true that among the western media scholars, the NFC is regarded as a non-issue, some of the scholars still are inclined to admit that there is really an imbalance in news flow between the developed and underdeveloped nations. But this admission is often branded the logical consequence of the developed gap between the industrialized nations and the South. Arguing that the world is a free marketplace of ideas where information/news flow should be free and unhindered, they also refuse to recognize anything insidious in the virtual saturation of the underdeveloped African nations by news reports and cultural artifacts originating from the West at the detriment of African political, economic, and cultural stability [Okigbo, 1996].

Third World journalists and Scholars, on their part, counter-charged 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. According to Okigbo (1996:284), "a survey of the main current of 20th century scholarship must reveal the pivotal position of the controversy about the imbalance in the global flow of news. By some accounts few issues in international relations have generated as much heat as the debate on NWICO, which proved to be mostly ideological."

Furthermore, and in the nature of ideological debates and controversies, much heat has been generated but very little progress has been made thus, the debate has been described as "dialogue of the deaf" "much ado about nothing" and "misplaced in important respects? (Plowman, 1979; Atwood and Murphy 1982; Uche, 1986). One School of thought argues that the controversy has not benefited from the increasing scientism and empiricism that have featured recent communication scholarship, and thus the debate, according to Okigbo (1986:284) "was more often than not based on opinionated conjectures that often lacked the support of objective facts and reliable statistics"

The furor has become more intensive and academic in the South where nearly all aspects of "Communication-related policy discussion, research and action

implementation... has been conceived in terms of a New World Information and Communication Order' (White, 1988:783). The major focus of the South grievance is that there is a deliberate attempt by the developed countries, especially the western world, to exploit the advantages of their industrial and economic superiority to establish and perpetuate domination in mass media systems over the developing nations both quantitatively and qualitatively. Agba (2002: 257) says that:

Quantitative imbalance concerns the amount of news flow in both directions (developing and developed). It is argued that most news and information flow from the developed to the undeveloped world while news and information only crawl up from the latter to the former.

In addition to the quantitative imbalance in the flow of news, there is perhaps a more serious qualitative imbalance, which manifests itself in the pre-eminence of unfavourable third world news in the international news systems (Okigbo, 1990: 339). According to Ekeanyanwu (2005), most South nations never get a mention in the media of the western world unless the bizarre or disaster/crisis oriented event occurs. The implication of this is that only news about poverty, hunger, political strives, disease, war, coup d'etat, disaster and other forms of crises are reported in the media of the western world. These same types of unfavourable news are relayed back to the developing countries for consumption.

The major complaint about

qualitative imbalance is that while the western media treasure reporting this crisis/disaster oriented news about the developing countries, no effort is made by them to report other favourable or positive oriented news that border on development and cultural growth. And these types of news are in abundance in the developing nations. This is what is really referred to as qualitative imbalance concentrating so much energy and resources in the reportage of unfavourable /negative news stories as against the little efforts put into reporting favourable, positive and development-oriented news stories (Ekeanyanwu, 2005). Furthermore, Egwu (2001:20) paints the picture thus:

Since 1883, when the first newspaper was published, publication has been dominated by the North, especially the USA. Today, the United States has over 25,000 periodicals; over 1,200 book publishers; over 10,000 radio stations (Am & Fm); over 1,000 television stations; and some 26million other types of (e.g. citizens band) Radios. There is therefore a situation of media monopoly by the North, not only in hardware, but also in soft wares. News Agencies also abound in the North (AP, Reuters, UPI, CNN, VOA, BBC etc) to the annoying neglect and marginalization of the South, especially Africa.

Nwosu's (1979:10) comparative content analysis of four British and American newspaper's coverage of the continent indicated that 0.1% of the entire news space was used in their coverage of Africa over a period of four months. This reveals serious under-reporting of the African continent. Nwosu's study also supports the accusation by third world media scholars that much of Western reporting on Africa is characterized by 'bush fire' journalism where crises predominate to the vital exclusion of development oriented news.

Okunna (1993: 95-96) citing Jika (1987) says that the developed or centre countries of the world also dominate the international flow of news largely due to the domination by the developed nations of world communication structures and resources, which include news agencies, satellite broadcast facilities, newspapers and magazines. Domatob (1988) also quoted by Okunna (1993:94) is also of the same view when he says that world news has always been dominated by the Big four international news agencies: Reuters (Britain) Associated Press (US), United Press International (US) and Agence France Presse (France). He goes further to state that even in those Third World countries, which have made good progress in reducing their dependence on other types of imported western media programmes, their reliance on the "Big Four" for world news, is virtually complete.

Despite the establishment of national and regional news agencies, this situation has

not changed in the last decade as much as it necessary to democratize communication in the world. In Africa, for instance, there is still increasing concern among African countries that the news coverage of their affairs by foreign news agencies is grossly inadequate (Ochogwu, 1987: 7). While most media houses in Africa have regular slots and spaces for news originating from the developed world, African countries are either not being covered at all in the media of the western world (quantitative) or endure malicious negative news reports about events in these countries (qualitative).

The MacBride Commission, which was set up in December 1977 by UNESCO to study communication problems globally states in her final report that:

News flows tend towards a North-South direction and inhibit development of exchanges between developing countries themselves. While there is a flood of news on the east / west axis between North America and Europe, as well as, although on a lower level, between socialist and Western countries, the much lesser one-way flow between North and South can hardly be called an exchange due to the excessive imbalance. There are, obviously, various reasons, both inside developing countries and on the international scene, which prevent media from counteracting the blanketing effect of the one-way flow.

This belief has been reinforced by the Timbergen report to the "Club of Rome" on information flow in 1977. The report states:

It must also be recognized that

international dissemination has long formed the subject of discriminatory practices ... the monopolistic and discriminatory practices inherent in current international information dissemination must be deemed as one of the worst.

The argument here is that communication according to MacBride *et.al* (1981); has become an "exchange between two unequal protagonists without necessarily having to compete, but instead allows the predominance of the more powerful, the richer and the better equipped to continue to monopolize the flow of news". Momoh (1988:7) strengthens this view, when he states thus:

It is common knowledge that news from Third World countries usually make their appearance in the media of developed countries only when they are sensational and border on drama strong enough to arouse their sensibilities and sense of curiosity.

Okigbo (1980:6) also points out "despite the fact that the developing countries account for about 75 percent of the world population, less than 30 percent of world news coverage is devoted to them". Okigbo argues further that this leads to a perpetual under-covering of the regions, the ultimate result of which is lack of adequate information about these areas". He goes on to say that the flow of world news is mostly

unidirectional. Thus, according to him, the average South citizen is more likely to know more about the western world than the Third World. This paucity of news flow from the Third World to the western world also means that the average westerner is likely to know very little about the Third World. This inadequate and biased flow of international news around the globe has led to the perpetuation of some prejudices and the holding of certain attitudes that do not support global co-operation based on fairness, equity and just treatment.

However, the reaction of the west to Third World charges has not been decidedly unidirectional. Some westerners admit the charges of imbalance but note that even the Third World is biased too in its coverage of the rest of the world; because, according to some of these scholars, "bias is characteristic of every journalism" (Merrill, 1983: 14-15).

In defense of the western hegemony over global news flows pattern, Stevenson and Gaddy (1982) quoted by Uche (1996: 226) deny that the African media systems are prisoners of the western news agencies. They argue that the complaints of the South against the western media are less problems of journalism in general. They assert that Third World editors are to blame for their over-selection of conflict news events from the western wire services. They, however, point out that since conflict is newsworthy, the imbalance in global news flow is a reflection of events; observing that there are more international conflicts in the Third World than in the rest of the world.

However, Gerald Long, the former General Manager of Reuters, quoted by Rosenblum (1978:21) says:

We are sometimes accused of not doing what we have not set out to do. How can you give a complete picture of e.g. India in, say, 3,000 words a day? No, we're not and we can't...we must operate on the principle of news as exception. Reuters tries to give a fair picture, a rounded picture, but we can only send a limited amount, and we must be selective.

Rosenblum (1978:21) on his own, to support the above views says:

There is little demand for African news in much of the world, and the cost of maintaining correspondent there are high. International news agencies concentrate on crises centers Lebanon, the Israeli borders, Southern Africa and pay scant attention to most other areas until they become a "story"

In furtherance of the western view point on the NFC, Uche (1996:214) citing a study carried by Cherry (1985), summarized the findings of that study thus:

Using four Anglophone African newspapers (the Kenya Standard, the Daily Times of Nigeria, the times of Zambia and Tanzania's Daily

News) to ascertain the effects of the NWICO debate, Cherry found that for newspapers in the developing world, news is defined in western terms and from western perspectives. The study found that 51% of the foreign news items in the sample Anglophone newspapers originated from the west; at the same time the newspapers failed to identify about 59% of the sources of their foreign news items. The study found a high preponderance of emphasis on local issues on the Anglophone newspapers, as does the press in the west. Above all, the study indicted the Anglophone African press for not demonstrating interest in non-western news agencies, foreign news from neighboring countries, or foreign news about non-western topics.

Surprisingly and interestingly too, most studies on the content of global news in the Nigerian press that were carried out by Nigerian scholars support both the findings of Stevenson and Gaddy, and Cherry (Uche, 1996). For instance, Pratt (1987:44) did a content analysis of six Nigerian newspapers to determine the content of foreign news in relation to local news in the Nigerian press and discovers that Nigerian newspapers gave more coverage (76%) to local news stories, than they did to foreign news items

which attracted only 24% coverage. In the same vein, Nwuneli (1971:41) in a study on the Nigerian press coverage of the mercenary invasion of Guinea, found that though the news of invasion reached Nigeria one hour after it had begun, the Nigerian press did not report it until the third day, due to lack of personnel and facilities to make such coverage possible.

A similar study of the coverage of the 1973 Yom Kippur war between Israel and the Arab countries showed that non of the four newspapers sampled in Nigeria presented on the spot coverage of the war yet most of their news stories and editorial comments were grossly anti-Israel (Dare, 197:34). The volume of news about Angola during the Angolan independence crisis that eventually led to a civil war between MPLA and UNITA rebels, increased in five national newspapers in Nigeria. This was after the Federal Government of Nigeria has given diplomatic recognition to the MPLA led Government and volunteered military and relief aids (Nwuneli et al, 1977:38). Another related study by Nwuneli (1982:24) also found out that the Nigerian press devoted 50% of their total news to local events, and over 50% of its space allocated to foreign news to African region, while allocating only 24% space to Third World countries outside Africa, and a paltry remaining one quarter (1/4) or 26% to the developed countries.

Oso (1978:31) similarly studied the amount of foreign news in Nigerian newspapers and found that the Nigerian press showed more interest in selected parts of the world,

notably Africa, the Middle East, Western Europe and the United States of America. He also found that news about developing countries that appeared in the Nigerian press were mainly political conflicts, war, negotiations for arms, violence and crime.

In a recent study by the author on the coverage of the 2004 United States Presidential Election in the Nigerian media, the following conclusions were reached:

It is obvious that the Nigeria mass media did not give the 2004 United State Presidential Election the desired attention it required and the stories did not receive adequate treatment either. For the three weeks under study (about 23 days), This Day mentioned the story of US Election 29 times, vanguard 37 times, Punch 25 times and Guardian 45 times. The radio stations were not left out in this gross under coverage and reportage of a global event. The two radio stations monitored only discussed the issue in 15 separate broadcasts. Furthermore, all the newspapers under study did not give the event the prominence it required. Only 31% of the entire This Day reports were deemed important to appear in the Front and Back pages. The rest 69% were buried on the Inside pages. Vanguard and Guardian's cases are even worse.

Vanguard only had 19% of the news reported on the front page and the rest 81% were lost on the inside pages. Guardian also had 18% of the news reported on the front page and the rest 82% on the inside pages. Punch was a little bit more global in the coverage and reportage of the event. About 36% of the reports appeared on the front page while the remaining 64% appeared on the inside pages. (Ekeanyanwu, 2006:26)

The findings of these studies tend to suggest that the Nigerian press gave about 70% of the space in their newspapers to local news. This implies that they (Nigerian media) are also guilty of the charges leveled against the western press with regards to the quantitative and qualitative imbalance in international news flow. The presupposition about all these conflicting and related views on the global news flows pattern is that communication disparities and domination occur at different levels and in different forms. It could occur between developed and developing countries, between developed nations sharing the same ideological beliefs and between Third World nations themselves.

It is ironical and morally wrong, therefore, that Nigeria and other African countries charge the western nations of quantitative and qualitative imbalance in the flow of world news, while, in fact, their newspapers and magazines publish mostly local news and give less attention to world news. This conclusion is supported by a

comprehensive study by Nwuneli and Udoh (1982). They sampled some Nigerian newspapers for a period of one year and found that most of the foreign news that appears in the Nigerian press rarely appears on the front page no matter the level of their importance. According to the study, in a one-year period, only three percent of the 1,487 news items published in the Nigerian press appeared in the front page.

The trend in professional conformity in the Nigerian media is equally upheld in another study which found the Nigerian mass media to have followed the western media pattern of emphasizing top-ranking political figures and personalities in their global news reports, and tended to select those news items relating to those African and other Third World nations that experience conflicts (Ugboaja, 1984:31). The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) has also been found to be transmitting its news in manner similar to the much-criticized western news agencies that focus on the bizarre and on conflicts, instead of development news (Dare, 1983:28).

METHODOLOGY

This study demands the use of content analysis, which according to Rivers (1975:6) is a research method or technique that enables researchers to study written works systematically and quantitatively. Dare (1991:6) also define content analysis as a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication".

Content analysis is used in this study to analyze the manifest content of the selected newspapers using topic categories already developed specifically for this investigation. These topic categories include:

1. Political and Government news
2. Economic news
3. Science and technology news
4. Education news
5. Sports news
6. Arts entertainment, culture and tourism news
7. Religious news
8. Crime
9. Disaster news
10. War, conflicts and defence news
11. Human interest news
12. Photo news.

The author also developed some other units of analysis to determine the level of prominence attached to the reports, the news sources, the direction or slant taken by the newspapers, and the quality of the reports. To determine the nature of prominence attached to the crises by the newspapers, the following divisions were also made:

1. **Front page (FP)** stories mean very important stories.
2. **Back page (BP)** stories are next in prominence.
3. **Inside Page (IP)** stories are least in the order of importance placed on the reports.

For sources of the reports, four categories

were developed:

1. **Local/Internal Sources:** These refer to news sources that are within the Nigerian media industry. These include all staff employed and paid by the newspaper under study.

2. **African News Agencies:** These refer to news sources and organs that are totally owned and managed by Africans examples include Pan African News Agency (PANA) and News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

3. **International News Agencies:** These refer to the four transnational news agencies- Reuters, United Press International, Associated Press and Agence France Presse all in the West and owned by the western world. They are also referred to as the 'Big Four' in this study.

4. **Unidentified in the Reports:** This will specifically refer to news stories written without a known by-line and the sources used in writing the stories are also not identified.

For Slant/direction or tone, the following labels were created:

1. **Favourable to Western Interests:** This indicates stories or reports in the Nigerian press which present or support the western viewpoints on the issues raised in the reports. Both in language and content, favourable reports are positive oriented towards western stands on the issues reported in the news.

2. **Unfavourable to Western Interests** on the other hand represents

reports in the Nigerian press which do not support the western viewpoints on the issues raised in the reports. Both in language and content, unfavourable reports are negative in perspective towards western stands on the issues reported in the news.

3. **Neutral:** This is used in this study to indicate such reports that do not betray their stance or take any of the earlier positions both in content and the language of the presentation.

For the quality of the reports, four labels were developed for this level of analysis. They are:

1. **Very High:** These are reports adjudged by the author as excellent in quality with regards to the content and the language of presentation.

2. **High:** These are reports adjudged by the author to be very good in quality with regards to the content and the language of presentation.

3. **Very Low:** These are reports adjudged by the author to be very poor in quality with regards to the content and the language of presentation.

4. **Low:** These are reports adjudged by the author to be poor in quality with regards to the content and the language of presentation.

Finally, the frequency of coverage was determined by measuring the total international reports about the western world against the total international reports about the non-western world.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The population of this study consists of all the newspapers and magazines that are published in Nigeria and owned by Nigerians. However, from this population, only the newspapers were selected for study. This is because the news magazines do not carry news on a day to-day basis. They only recapitulate news already reported in the daily newspapers and give them in-depth analysis and interpretation. Most of the magazines are also "gossip columns" which will not help the cause of this study.

Four daily newspapers were therefore selected as sample for this study. The newspapers are the *Guardian*, the *Vanguard*, the *Punch* and *This Day*. Four issues per month per newspaper were selected from a total of 1,460 issues of the newspapers under study. This gives a total of 48 different issues for a period of 12 months for each of the selected newspapers. On the whole, 192 issues of the four different newspapers were analyzed. The issues/editions selected for study are:

- a. June 2001 issues 3rd, 7th, 10th and 25th
- b. July 2001 issues 9th, 11th, 21st & 28th
- c. August 2001 issues 1st, 3rd, 22nd and 24th
- d. September 2001 issues 8th, 13th, 19th and 30th
- e. October 2001 issues 2nd, 10th, 11th & 19th
- f. December 2001 issues 1st, 19th, 21st & 22nd
- g. February 2002 issues 3rd, 24th, 25th & 27th
- h. April 2002 issues- 4th, 12th, 22nd & 30th
- i. November 2001 issues 6th, 7th, 11th & 28th

- j. January 2002 issues 7th, 9th, 21st & 22nd
- k. March 2002 issues 2nd, 5th, 28th & 30th
- l. May 2002 issues 14th, 16th, 22nd & 25th.

The decision to study only newspapers and the selection of only four newspapers out of the lot in Nigeria was made using the purposive sampling technique. The reason for using the purposive sampling technique was to meet the study objectives set by the researchers. Nworgu (1991:78) supports this reason thus:

In purposive sampling, specific elements, which satisfy some predetermined criteria, are selected. Although the criteria to be used are usually a matter of the researcher's judgment, he exercises this judgment in relation to what he thinks will constitute a representative sample with respect to the research purpose.

Based on this argument, the author selected the above newspapers because of their ownership patterns, circulation strength, availability, and their wide range of coverage of both national and international issues involving the western world.

However, the four issues to be studied per month per newspaper were selected using the simple random sampling technique. This method ensured that every unit of the population had a calculable and equal chance of being selected in the sample. For the selection of the samples, numbers from

one to thirty- one, depending on the month in question, were assigned on identical cards to the units in the population. These cards were put in a container and reshuffled thoroughly each time before a draw was made. The cards were drawn one at a time in a lottery fashion until the four issues for each month were selected. The draw was done with replacement. Any date or issue picked twice for a particular month was returned to the container until a different issue is picked from a subsequent draw. This implied that all the issues had equal probability of being selected. This is calculated as one over thirty or one over thirty-ones depending on the month in question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented in the form of cross tabulation tables with regards to the relevance of such tables to the research objectives and questions. Below are the summaries of the tables.

TABLE 1
Distribution of Western Stories by News Classification and Prominence Attached To the Stories.

News Classification		Prominence		Inside Page Reports	Total
		Front Page News	Back Page News		
Political and Government News	Count	20	5	35	60
	% of Total	3.3%	.8%	5.8%	9.9%
Economic News	Count	5	0	73	78
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	12.0%	12.9%
Science and Technology News	Count	0	0	24	24
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Education News	Count	0	0	8	8
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	1.3%	1.3%
Arts, Entertainment, Culture and Tourism News	Count	0	0	9	9
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	1.5%	1.5%
Sports News	Count	0	0	96	96
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	15.8%	15.8%
Religious News	Count	0	0	5	5
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	.8%	.8%
Crime Reports	Count	0	0	30	30
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	4.9%	4.9%
Disaster News	Count	4	5	43	52
	% of Total	.7%	.8%	7.1%	8.6%
War, Conflicts and Defense News	Count	15	0	113	128
	% of Total	2.5%	.0%	18.6%	21.1%
Human Interest Stories	Count	0	0	19	19
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	3.1%	3.1%
Picture News	Count	3	6	89	98
	% of Total	.5%	1.0%	14.7%	16.1%
Total	Count	47	16	544	607
	% of Total	7.7%	2.6%	89.6%	100.0%

TABLE 2
Distribution of Western Stories by News Sources and Prominence Attached to the Stories.

Prominence News Sources		Front Page News	Back Page News	Inside Page Reports	Total
Local and Internal Sources	Count	15	0	36	51
	% of Total	2.5%	.0%	5.9%	8.4%
African News Agencies	Count	2	0	0	2
	% of Total	.3%	.0%	.0%	.3%
International News Agencies	Count	8	5	110	123
	% of Total	1.3%	.8%	18.1%	20.3%
Unidentified in the Reports	Count	22	11	398	431
	% of Total	3.6%	1.8%	65.6%	71.0%
Total	Count	47	16	544	607
	% of Total	7.7%	2.6%	89.6%	100.0%

TABLE 3
Distribution of Western Stories by News Classification and News Sources

News Classification		News Sources				Total
		Local and Internal Sources	African News Agencies	International News Agencies	Unidentified in the Reports	
Political and Government News	Count	10	2	20	28	60
	% of Total	1.6%	.3%	3.3%	4.6%	9.9%
Economic News	Count	5	0	10	63	78
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	1.6%	10.4%	12.9%
Science and Technology News	Count	5	0	10	9	24
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	1.6%	1.5%	4.0%
Education News	Count	0	0	6	2	8
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	1.0%	.3%	1.3%
Arts, Entertainment, Culture and Tourism News	Count	0	0	7	2	9
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	1.2%	.3%	1.5%
Sports News	Count	5	0	16	75	96
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	2.6%	12.4%	15.8%
Religious News	Count	1	0	0	4	5
	% of Total	.2%	.0%	.0%	.7%	.8%
Crime Reports	Count	5	0	8	17	30
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	1.3%	2.8%	4.9%
Disaster News	Count	5	0	20	27	52
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	3.3%	4.4%	8.6%
War, Conflicts and Defense News	Count	5	0	6	117	128
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	1.0%	19.3%	21.1%
Human Interest Stories	Count	5	0	0	14	19
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	.0%	2.3%	3.1%
Picture News	Count	5	0	20	73	98
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	3.3%	12.0%	16.1%
Total	Count	51	2	123	431	607
	% of Total	8.4%	.3%	20.3%	71.0%	100.0%

TABLE 4
Distribution of Western Stories by News Classification and Slant/Direction of the Reports

News Classification		Slant/Direction of the Reports			TOTAL
		Favourable to Western Interests	Unfavourable to Western Interests	Neutral	
Political and Government News	Count	37	10	13	60
	% of Total	6.1%	1.6%	2.1%	9.9%
Economic News	Count	4	48	26	78
	% of Total	.7%	7.9%	4.3%	12.9%
Science and Technology News	Count	20	0	4	24
	% of Total	3.3%	.0%	.7%	4.0%
Education News	Count	0	0	8	8
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	1.3%	1.3%
Arts, Entertainment, Culture and Tourism News	Count	5	0	4	9
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	.7%	1.5%
Sports News	Count	54	17	25	96
	% of Total	8.9%	2.8%	4.1%	15.8%
Religious News	Count	0	5	0	5
	% of Total	.0%	.8%	.0%	.8%
Crime Reports	Count	0	23	7	30
	% of Total	.0%	3.8%	1.2%	4.9%
Disaster News	Count	0	31	21	52
	% of Total	.0%	5.1%	3.5%	8.6%
War, Conflicts and Defense News	Count	9	99	20	128
	% of Total	1.5%	16.3%	3.3%	21.1%
Human Interest Stories	Count	8	0	11	19
	% of Total	1.3%	.0%	1.8%	3.1%
Picture News	Count	0	94	4	98
	% of Total	.0%	15.5%	.7%	16.1%
Total	Count	137	327	143	607
	% of Total	22.6%	53.9%	23.6%	100.0%

TABLE 5
Distribution of Western Stories by News Classification and Quality of the Reports

News Classification		Quality of the Reports				TOTAL
		Very High	High	Very Low	Low	
Political and Government News	Count	20	40	0	0	60
	% of Total	3.3%	6.6%	.0%	.0%	9.9%
Economic News	Count	11	67	0	0	78
	% of Total	1.8%	11.0%	.0%	.0%	12.9%
Science and Technology News	Count	9	15	0	0	24
	% of Total	1.5%	2.5%	.0%	.0%	4.0%
Education News	Count	5	3	0	0	8
	% of Total	.8%	.5%	.0%	.0%	1.3%
Arts, Entertainment, Culture and Tourism News	Count	9	0	0	0	9
	% of Total	1.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.5%
Sports News	Count	18	47	28	3	96
	% of Total	3.0%	7.7%	4.6%	.5%	15.8%
Religious News	Count	5	0	0	0	5
	% of Total	.8%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.8%
Crime Reports	Count	10	0	9	11	30
	% of Total	1.6%	.0%	1.5%	1.8%	4.9%
Disaster News	Count	9	24	10	9	52
	% of Total	1.5%	4.0%	1.6%	1.5%	8.6%
War, Conflicts and Defense News	Count	16	72	26	14	128
	% of Total	2.6%	11.9%	4.3%	2.3%	21.1%
Human Interest Stories	Count	0	12	7	0	19
	% of Total	.0%	2.0%	1.2%	.0%	3.1%
Picture News	Count	50	19	21	98	98
	% of Total	1.3%	8.2%	3.1%	3.5%	16.1%
Total	Count	120	330	99	58	607
	% of Total	19.8%	54.4%	16.3%	9.6%	100.0%

TABLE 6
Depth of Coverage

CATEGORY	Frequency	%
News About The Western World	607	43.76%
News About The Non-Western World	780	56.24%
TOTAL	1,387	100.0%

THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the presentation and analysis of the study data above, observations, literature review and experience, it is now very clear that imbalance is a feature of all media systems around the world especially in the reportage of global news events (see Merrill, 1983: 14-15; Ekeanyanwu, 2005).

However, the focus of this study is not on how the Nigerian press reports the world. This study is on how the western world is reported in the Nigerian press. Consequently, the data gathered and

analyzed were not able to prove if the Nigerian press gave adequate coverage to world news events or not.

However, a total of 1,387 foreign news stories were reported in the Nigerian press for the study period of 12 months. As explained above, the percentage of this to local or national news reported could not be ascertained, as it is not within the purview of the study. However, 43.76% of this foreign news reports were specifically about the west the study focus. From all indications, this is adequate quantitatively. The western world in this study is operationalized to mean just the few advanced countries of Western Europe notably France, Britain and Germany and then the United States of America. These countries put together got 607 of the 1,387 foreign news reports in the Nigerian press as against the 780 or 56.24% reported about the rest of the world.

This means that 56.4% of the total foreign news reports in the Nigerian press were about the Second and Third World countries, which got the remaining 43.76%. 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. This is a revelation and a deviation from earlier research findings that accused the Nigerian press of under reporting the western world.

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 unfavourable reportage of the Western World. As could be deduced, 34.65% of the entire Western news reports were devoted to the reporting of war, conflicts, defence, crime and disaster news stories. Most of the pictures published during the study period were also about negative or unfavourable news events which center on conflicts, crime, and disaster. In addition, only these negative or unfavourable news events make their appearances in the front pages of the Nigerian press. This is evident in the fact that about 61.7% of the entire news stories that appeared on the front pages of the newspapers were about war, conflict, defence, crime and disaster. All these point to one singular fact that the Nigerians press is guilty of qualitative imbalance in its reportage of the western world. This goes in line to support earlier research findings that the Nigerian press treats news as an exception or oddity according to Western media standards of news evaluation. Therefore, if the foregoing is true of all media systems in the world, recommendations will be made later in the study which will help create the atmosphere of mutual co-operation and understanding amongst the combatants in the global news flow controversy.

Another major result of this study is the revelation that the Nigerian press does not identify the source[s] used in reporting its foreign news events. This is not so in its reportage of local news events. Every local news event reported in the Nigerian press always or usually carries a byline or at least dateline. This is not so for the foreign news

reports. The study shows that 71.01% of the entire foreign news report about the western world were without bylines and did not identify the sources of the reports. This is unethical and unprofessional because source identification adds to the veracity and authenticity of a story or a report.

However, many reasons could be adduced for the non-identification of the source(s) of foreign news reports by the Nigerian press. One of such reasons which is speculated in many circles is that most of these foreign news reports are mainly monitored through the international news agencies and so, the newspapers are 'ashamed' to indicate this because it will prove their deliberate over dependence on the international news agencies for foreign news reports while still crying foul at the imbalances created by this over dependence.

This view is supported by the fact that out of the entire news stories that their sources were identified, 20% attributed it to the international news agencies, which are mostly Western. This again goes a long way to prove the age-long accusation that the Western news agencies or the 'Big Four' dominate the sourcing and distribution of international news. However, the Nigerian press should be blamed for its over reliance on the Western news agencies for their foreign news reports.

The reasons for this as well as the solutions should constitute the focus of a different but related study on global news flow. This over-reliance on the Western news agencies by the Nigerian press is supported by an

earlier study by Uche (1996:226):

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 a new international information and communication structure that would guarantee equity and fairness in news coverage. However, their dependence on western media sources is attributable to the poor economy of the nation, limitations in communication technology infrastructure, and low level of professionalism of the editors, most of who see journalism and mass communication as an all-comers affair.

Subsequently, it is argued that since the western news agencies dominate the sourcing and distribution of world news and the Nigerian press, which is guilty of qualitative imbalance on its reportage of the same western world whose news agencies the Nigerian press used in its report; it then follows that the Western media do not deliberately under report the rest of the world especially the Third World countries

quantitatively. An African proverb says, "If crocodiles can eat their own eggs, what then will they not do to the eggs of a lizard". The cries of qualitative imbalance against the Western press by the Nigerian press is also misplaced and misunderstood. Before these accusations could be properly justified, the Western media's evaluation of what 'news' is as well as the Western audience values and news evaluation standards should be reconsidered and re-evaluated. This will put the accusations in proper perspective and context.

The crux of my argument, which will form the conclusion and the basis for the recommendations at the end of this study report, is that the so-called 'imbalance' in the flow of world news is a feature of almost all media systems around the world. Therefore, no media system of any country is competent enough or has the moral standing or rectitude to accuse the other of these imbalances. What I strongly believe exists and which is inferred from this study and the other related studies cited in the entirety of this work is what I will professionally describe as "dependence" and "unprofessional conduct" of the various media systems in their reportage of world news.

Dependence here is a situation whereby a country's media system relies partially or totally on another for their information and communication needs. The South countries totally depend on the Western countries for their information and communication hard-and-soft wares and this is what basically causes imbalance. Unless the situation

changes and the South become truly "dependent", cries of imbalance will continue to be heard until eternity.

Unprofessional conduct, on the other hand, is a situation whereby a country's media system encourages and perpetrates the deliberate distortion, misinformation, misrepresentation of news and the other reportage of crisis oriented and disaster news stories. This unethical conduct is replete in all the media systems studied by one researcher or the other.

The presentation and analysis of data has also largely answered the research questions as well as helped to satisfy the study objectives.

Research Question One:

To what extent does the Nigerian press reports news about the western world?

The analysis clearly shows that out of about 1,387 foreign news reports in the Nigerian press, 607 news stories were reported about the western world. This represents 43.76% of the entire foreign news reports. Based on this data, the western world is not under reported in the South's press.

Research Question Two:

Which type of news classification has the highest frequency in the Nigerian Press?

As could be deduced from the analysis, War/Conflicts/Defence news has the highest reportage in the Nigerian press. This was followed by Photo and sports news. However, if War/Conflict/Defence, Crime and Disaster news are put together, they constitute the highest news reported in the

quantitatively. An African proverb says, "If crocodiles can eat their own eggs, what then will they not do to the eggs of a lizard". The cries of qualitative imbalance against the Western press by the Nigerian press is also misplaced and misunderstood. Before these accusations could be properly justified, the Western media's evaluation of what 'news' is as well as the Western audience values and news evaluation standards should be reconsidered and re-evaluated. This will put the accusations in proper perspective and context.

The crux of my argument, which will form the conclusion and the basis for the recommendations at the end of this study report, is that the so-called 'imbalance' in the flow of world news is a feature of almost all media systems around the world. Therefore, no media system of any country is competent enough or has the moral standing or rectitude to accuse the other of these imbalances. What I strongly believe exists and which is inferred from this study and the other related studies cited in the entirety of this work is what I will professionally describe as "dependence" and "unprofessional conduct" of the various media systems in their reportage of world news.

Dependence here is a situation whereby a country's media system relies partially or totally on another for their information and communication needs. The South countries totally depend on the Western countries for their information and communication hard-and-soft wares and this is what basically causes imbalance. Unless the situation

changes and the South become truly "dependent", cries of imbalance will continue to be heard until eternity.

Unprofessional conduct, on the other hand, is a situation whereby a country's media system encourages and perpetrates the deliberate distortion, misinformation, misrepresentation of news and the other reportage of crisis oriented and disaster news stories. This unethical conduct is replete in all the media systems studied by one researcher or the other.

The presentation and analysis of data has also largely answered the research questions as well as helped to satisfy the study objectives.

Research Question One:

To what extent does the Nigerian press reports news about the western world?

The analysis clearly shows that out of about 1,387 foreign news reports in the Nigerian press, 607 news stories were reported about the western world. This represents 43.76% of the entire foreign news reports. Based on this data, the western world is not under reported in the South's press.

Research Question Two:

Which type of news classification has the highest frequency in the Nigerian Press?

As could be deduced from the analysis, War/Conflicts/Defence news has the highest reportage in the Nigerian press. This was followed by Photo and sports news. However, if War/Conflict/Defence, Crime and Disaster news are put together, they constitute the highest news reported in the

Nigerian press. This shows that the Nigerian press also engaged in the reportage of crisis-oriented news, which amounts to qualitative imbalance.

Research Question Three:

What is the level importance placed on these news stories or reports?

As stated earlier in this study report, importance placed on the news reports is determined using the stories that appear on the front pages as the most important while those news that appear on the inside pages are regarded as the least in importance. The analysis shows that only 7.71% of the entire Western news reported in the Nigerian press appeared on the front pages of the newspapers. This means that the Nigerian press only placed serious importance on 47 news stories about the Western World in a period of 12 months. 89.62% of the news were reported on the inside pages while the remaining 2.64% were reported on the back pages. The implication here is that the Nigerian press did not attach much importance to news in its reportage of the western world. The Nigerian press is therefore guilty of bias treatment of news of western world origin.

Research Question Four:

How does the Nigerian press get its news or reports about the western world?

The analysis shows that 71.01% of the source(s) of reporting news about the Western World were unidentified. However, out of the identified sources, the Nigerian press depended mostly on the international news agencies for the sources of their news about the western world.

Research Question Five:

Is the Nigerian press guilty of imbalance in their coverage/reportage of the western world?

The study findings clearly indicate that there are elements of criticisms leveled against international news agencies in the reportage of Western countries by the Nigerian press. This pattern or slant in the reportage of the Western countries that we discovered in the Nigerian press has been the same pattern that exists in the international news agencies. These findings support earlier research findings by Merrill (1983:14-15; Ekeanyanwu, 2005), which also suggest that imbalance in the sourcing, and distribution as well as the coverage of global news and events is a feature of all media systems in the world.

CONCLUSION

Considering the number of valuable man-hours the News Flow Controversy has consumed and its volatile nature, it is imperative that the combatants to the controversy should revisit their individual stands so as to re-evaluate their points of view in order to arrive at a practical conclusion on the issue. Enough research findings have continued to point at a singular fact-that imbalance really exists but it also exists in everything else we do, including information and communication. Imbalance is, therefore, a feature of all media systems in the world.

Therefore, the researcher is of the view that the cry about imbalance should be downplayed while the causes of dependence and unethical or unprofessional conducts which

really exist in all media systems should be determined and stopped. This will be the beginning of a 'new beginning' in the search for an end to the News Flow Controversy.

Okon (1993:71) summarizes this view thus: *A summation of these data show that the Nigerian journalistic practice does not deviate from the charges leveled against the western journalistic practice. It must, however, be noted that the tendency by most countries' media to under-report foreign news is not shallow and as such cannot be treated in isolation.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested as a contribution to the raging controversy in order to help end the controversial debate. These recommendations include: acceptance of "imbalance" as feature of all media systems as long as "dependence" continues to exist and there is no deliberate attempt to under-report, distort, misinform, misrepresent and over-report sensational, crises-oriented and disaster news.

Encouragement of local production of both media soft-and-hard wares as well as the professionals to operate and maintain the hardware. Urunga as cited in Okunna (1993:98) summarizes this view when he writes thus:

...it is far more feasible for a country to close its doors to the import of ... programs produced abroad, as a

measure of political autonomy and cultural assertion, if it has previously taken the economic and political steps to create favourable conditions to stimulate the creation of programs whose distribution will be guaranteed by the state.

Another suggestion is the censorship of imported media software. However, the developed countries of the West always argue against this particular suggestion under the auspices of the concept of free flow of information. Hence, it is recommended that developing countries should jettison the ideals of freedom of information and free flow of information whenever national needs could be gratified by such an action (Okunna, 1988). Government should also put in place policies and programmes that will enable the effective and efficient existence of public, private and community ownership of the various media types. This will surely raise the level of creativity and socio-political awareness of the people so as to make them look 'inward' in their selection and use of media software.

There should be a reconsideration and re-evaluation of news evaluation standards in the developing nations if they hope to be truly independent. The researcher argues here that 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. Therefore, any meaningful

change must be accompanied by a new set of standards and news values.

Furthermore, there should be drastic and revolutionalistic change in our value system especially the educational system, which is presently highly westernized. We must have to start thinking inwards and natural in every sense of the word

Again, underdevelopment has remained the remote or root cause of the persistent call by the South for a change in the flow of world news. Bad leadership in the affected nations often causes this underdevelopment. Therefore, democracy, which is the ideal form of government the world over, should be promoted and practiced in all its ramifications by all countries of the world. This has a long-term effect of encouraging economic growth and development that will subsequently put the second and Third World countries in the right situation to participate efficiently in international affairs as an equal participant and no longer complainants in the international scene.

The Second and Third World news agencies should properly study the operations of the 'Big Four' news agencies and find out what make them tick. The aim of the study is to help them live up to the required international standards so that they will be in a position to espouse the various regions' perceptive in newsgathering and distributions.

The activities and operations of the South-South co-operation and Group 15 should be revisited and streamlined to follow the above recommendations.

Then, a law to prohibit quacks and charlatans from engaging in media practice should be enacted. The media profession should not be an all-comers affair. Efforts should also be made to increase the level of professionalism in the media industry through better training and retraining to meet up with changing circumstances. There should also be a general reform in the structure, management and ownership of national media systems in the Third World countries.

All these recommendations are basically for the Third and Second World countries to follow in order to address the situation in the short run. A more lasting solution that will enthrone international peace and cooperation is recommended by Uche (1996:315-316) thus:

Our suggested solution is for the IMF, the World Bank, the European Economic Community (EEC) and other international agencies, including the USAID and the rest of the industrialized world to invest in the industrialization of the Third World in a manner similar to the success they recorded during the imposition of colonial rule. Instead of erecting assembly plants and spare parts and sales outlets for the consumption of Western manufactured goods, let the industrialized west team up with their former colonial and dependant territories (now independent nations) for the development of

industries, technologies, information and communication systems that will depend on locally sourced materials to make their political independence meaningful. This strategy will discourage capital flight and one-way traffic in international trading, all of which promote and perpetuate dependence.

Ekeanyanwu (1998:62) also proposed a new model of international communication as it relates to the issue in question. The new model is improved in this study. This model is called the "Inter-Ecocultural Independency". The model applies only to the Third World countries. The concept advocates for a competitive international relations and communication between the Third World and the First World. However, because the First World is already equipped for this competition, this concept advocates then for an independent economic system that embraces Third World cultural values. Also, the educational system, which is currently highly westernized, should be indigenized in order to reflect the Third World value system. In essence, there should be a "revolution" in the mentioned fields because a continuous association to the Western oriented value system will make nonsense of the already mentioned recommendations.

The concept in summary advocates for an independent economic, social, and political system for the Third World nations, before they could start thinking of any form of "interaction" or relations with the already economically, socially, culturally, and

politically developed Western nations of Europe and North America. This Ecocultural Independency is very vital and essential for positive oriented change because it is only ignorance that makes the mouse to challenge the cat in a fight. If this independency is not achieved by Third World or developing nations, any form of interaction or relation with the West will continue to be marked by imbalances, because of these inequalities.

Therefore, there should be a total localization and indigenization of the socioeconomic, cultural and political values of the developing nations. This "ecocultural revolution" will equip the Third World or developing nations to face the rest of the world squarely in any issue in international relations and communication.

REFERENCES

- Abel, E. (1982), "Global Information: The New battleground" in Nwosu, I. E. (ed.) *Mass Communication and National Development*. Aba: Frontiers Publishers Limited.
- Agba, P.C. (2002). *International Communication: Issues, Concepts and Perspectives* in Okunna, C.S. (ed.) *Teaching Mass Communication: A multi-Dimensional Approach*. Enugu: New Generation Books.
- Atwood, L.E. and Murphy, S.M. (1982). *The Dialogue of the Deaf: The New*

- World Information Order Debate, *Gazette*. 30
- Cherry, D.L. (1985). Foreign news in Africa's Anglophone press: The effects of the debate for a new world information order, paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, May
- Dare, O. (1973). Analysis of the coverage of the 1973 Middle East War in the Nigerian Press, Unpublished B.A. graduation project, University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- Dare, O. (1983). News Agency of Nigeria: A study of its impact on the flow of news and the role conceptions of its staffers, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA.
- Egwu, E.U. (2001). Foreign Media Projection of Africa; The role African Communicators *the Nigeria journal of Communications*. Vol. 1, No. 1
- Ekeanyanwu, N.T. (1998). Effects of the World Information Flow Imbalance on Third World Culture: A case study of Nigeria, unpublished B.Sc graduation project, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra Nigeria.
- Ekeanyanwu, N.T. (2005). *International Communication: Issues, Concepts and Researches in the 21st Century*. Lagos: SMC.
- Ekeanyanwu, N.T. (2006). The Nigerian Media and Global Political Reportage: Coverage/Treatment of the 2004 US Presidential Elections. In *Journal of Communication Studies* Vol.5, NO.1-2, Pp 15-30.
- Ekwelie, S.A. (1985). Africa must redirect information flow, *Media development*. Enugu: New Generation Books.
- Fenby, I. (1986). *The International News Service*. New York: Shocken Books.
- Galliner, P. (1978). Improving News Flow in the Third World in Horton, P.C. (ed.) *The Third World and Press Freedom*. New York: Preaser.
- Jika, A.K. (1987). International Communication and Cultural Imperialism: the African Experience in *Africa Media Monograph Series*, No. 4.
- MacBride, S. et. al (1981). *Many Voices, One World*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Markel, L. (1978), Cited in Hoton, P.C. (ed) *The Third World and Press Freedom*. New York: Preaser.
- Masmoudi, M. (1979). The new world information order in *Journal of Communication* 29 (republished in

- Gerbner, G. and Siefert, M. (eds.) (1984) *World Communications: a handbook*. New York: Longman.
- M'Bow, A.M. (1981). Forward in Macbride, *et. al* (ed) *Op.cit.*
- Momoh, T. (1988). Towards a new African Information order, *New Nigeria*, 30 January.
- Mort, R. (1978). The Western Wire Services and the Third World in Horton, P.C. (ed) *Op. cit.*
- Merril, I. (1978), Cited by Agba, P.C. (2002) in Okunna, S.C. (ed.) *op.cit*
- Merril, J. (1983). *Global Journalism*. New York: Longman
- Nwosu, I.E. (1985). 'The Role of Research in Information Flow Controversy' in Nwuneli O.(ed.) *Mass Communication in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Nwosu, I.E. (1987). Foreign Media coverage of African Liberation Struggles. A content analytical case study of the Angolan crisis, *African Media Review* Vol.2
- Nwosu I.E. (ed) (1990). *Mass Communication and National Development*. Aba: Frontier Publishers Ltd.
- Nwuneli, O. (1971). The invasion of Guinea and the Nigerian Press Unpublished Manuscript, Institute of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Nwuneli, O. and Dare, O. (1977). The coverage of the Angolan crisis in the Nigerian press *Unilag Communication Review*. Lagos: Unilag Press
- Nwuneli, O. and Udo, E. (1982). International news coverage in Nigerian newspaper, *Gazette*, Vol.29
- Ochogwu, M.G. (1987). Africa and the New International Information Order , in *Africa Media Monograph Series*. *Op.cit*
- Okigbo, C. (1990). News Flow and Media Effects: Some perplexing questions in National Images in Nwosu, I.E. (ed.) *op.cit*
- Okigbo, C. (1996). International information flow and the challenge of the twenty first century to communication research in Uche. L.U. (ed.). *North-South Information Culture: Trends in Global Communication and Research Paradigm*. Lagos: Longman.
- Okunna, C. S., *et al* (1993). *Theory and practice of Mass Communication*. Enugu: Abic Publishers.

- Olasope, B. (1978). The Non Aligned News Agency Pool and the Free flow of Meaningful News: An African viewpoint in Horton, P.C. (ed.) *op.cit.*
- Oso, M. (1978). International News Flow: How Nigerian press reports the World, Unpublished B.A. graduation project, University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- Plowman, E.W. (1979). Satellite broadcasting, national sovereignty, and free flow of information in Nordestreng, K and Schiller, H.I. (ed.). *National Sovereignty and International Communication*. Norwood: Ablex.
- Pratt, B.A. (1978). Foreign news in Nigeria dailies: A comparative analysis. Unpublished B.A. graduation project, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Pratt, B.A. (1980). The reportage and images of Africa in US news and opinion magazines: a comparative study. *Gazette* 26.
- Stevenson, R.L. and Gaddy, G.D. (1982). Bad news and the Third World paper presented at the Annual conference of the International Communication Association, Boston, MA, USA.
- Uche, L.U. (1986). The New World Information and Communication order: much ado about nothing, *Communication socialis yearbook*. Vol.5.
- Uche, L. U. and Agumoha, U.N. (1996). Anglo-Nigerian Press coverage of a diplomat scandal; The Umaru Dikko Affair in Uche, L.U. (ed.) *North-South Information Culture*. *op.cit.*
- Ugbaoja, F.O. (1984). Foreign news coverage in Nigeria media: in George, Gerbner and Siefer, M(eds) *World Communication A Handbook*. New York: Longman.
- UNESCO, (1978). Reports and Papers on Mass Communication No.76
- UNESCO, (1981). Report of the Inter-governmental conference on communication policies on Africa CC/MD/46, Paris
- Vilanilan, I.V. (1983). Foreign Policy as a dorminant factor in foreign news selection and presentation *Gazette*. Vol 32, No. 2
- White, R.A. (1988). Progress towards a new World information and communication order: a Third World Perspective, *The Third Channel*. No.6. New York: Longman.