

**THE OVER-DEPENDENCE OF INDIAN  
ENGLISHNEWSPAPERS ON GLOBAL NEWS AGENCIES  
FOR INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the extent to which the Indian English newspapers rely on transnational news agencies like Reuters and A.P. for foreign news. It does so through a quantitative content analysis wherein the international news stories published in the three most widely read Indian English dailies are compared with the associated Reuters and A.P. content during the month of July, 2011. This was done to detect the verbatim usage of the agency copy in the papers' news reports.

The results of the analysis demonstrate that a large number of world stories published in the three newspapers are near complete replications of the agency wire copy (although the levels of publications' dependence on the news agencies vary) This has the possible ramification of changing the Indian concept of journalism. It might also lead to a lack of information diversity. The importation of large volume of foreign news stories also suggests that these few major transnational news agencies are assuming the role of agenda-setters in global news.

This study should be viewed in the larger context of the media imperialism theory as its findings indicate ,taking the Indian English newspapers' foreign news coverage, as a case in point that the dominant-dependent relationship between the developed Western countries (where these news agencies are based) and a developing country like India continue.

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## INTRODUCTION

Although there have been sporadic interests in news agency studies and global information flows especially during the decade 1960-1970, it should be noted that the issue of the increasingly influential role of transnational news agencies in global news has never acquired center stage in media-centric debates. Even the MacBride Report which published the finding of the landmark 1978 UNESCO-sponsored study on information imbalances between the advanced and the newly independent nations touched upon the issue of over-dependence on global news agencies briefly.

This dissertation sets out to investigate the extent to which the India English newspapers rely on transnational wire services like Reuters and AP. This study will test the following hypothesis: The Indian English Newspapers have an over-dependence on international news agencies for stories from around the world. The study also seeks to draw a comparison between the three dailies selected on their dependence on the news services. This would show which publication's uses agency copy in moderation and provides it readers with genuinely original international reportage.

This study also explores the various ramifications of this over-dependence on a few global news agencies. The original concept of journalism in India is that the mass media provide the people with detailed interpretations of events and incisive analyses. As envisioned by Gandhi, the media would catalyze social and political transformation in the country. However this is now changing and the Western model of journalism (institutionalized in the major international news agencies) that stresses professionalism, objectivity etc. is taking sway. Also if the dailies selected are sourcing the lion's share of their international news from a very limited number of news agencies indicates that the Indian English print media isn't conveying a multiplicity of meaningful voices and there is a serious lack of information diversity.

A large reliance on the international information services like Reuters and A.P. for foreign news also carrying carries the possible implication that these news agencies exercise an agenda setting role as the publications only report those events that have been selected by these agencies. By drawing a sizeable volume of world news from the transnational news agencies, the Indian English newspapers provide the people with an imported version of world events. Wu (2003) points out that the advanced Western countries continue to dominate the global press. Not only are the affairs of the developing countries

lesser reported than those of the elite nations, even when they are in the news it is because of “coups and earthquakes”(Rosenblum,1981).So, a near total dependence on these news agencies would perpetuate the negative stereotypes of the developing world of which India is a part. All these concerns are discussed in detail in the dissertation.

Although few in number, certain studies in the field of news agencies and international communication have brought forth empirical evidence underscoring that the media’s claim of presenting a plurality of perspectives in their reporting is often unsubstantiated. One of this is Paterson’s (2007) study “International News on the Internet why more is less” which has also been an influence on this study. This research analyzed major internet news aggregators and gauged their verbatim use of the agency copy. It dispelled the notion of information diversity associated with online news providers and revealed the supremacy of Reuters and AP in setting the international news agenda. Another study key to this project was Lewis’ (2008) “The Quality and Independence of British Journalism”. It showed that UK media are highly dependent on national and international news agencies as well as PR material in the form of press releases. Manning’s(2008) research also found an increasing reliance of Press Association(U.K.’s national news agency) reporters on the same limited number of news sources. These studies are discussed later in the dissertation.

The research method used for this study is content analysis which is a very frequently used approach in media studies. It allows the researcher to put the content of the media, in this case Indian English newspapers under the microscope and obtain quantitative results. The verbatim use of the news agency copy will be ascertained by a plagiarism detection software. The news report of the media organization will be compared against that of the wire services for matches and whether the former is a partial or complete copy of the agencies’ story will be determined.

This research is divided into a number of sections with the first being the Literature Review which gives an elaborate account of the rise of news agencies. It describes the concept of media imperialism which is the argument that ties in with this study. It also looks at the dependence of news organizations on wire services in other parts of the world. This is ensued by the methodology chapter that delves into the details of the content analysis method used in this research explaining the sampling technique, the definition of the units of analyses, the time frame of the research etc. Subsequently, a pilot study is conducted to tests the research’s procedures and the conclusions drawn from it are discussed. This is followed by the Findings and Analysis section in which the results of the content analysis are presented.

Then in the discussion, the possible limitations of an over-dependence on the major transnational news agencies are explored. And finally the conclusions are drawn from the study

## LITERATURE REVIEW

International news agencies have come to acquire an almost hegemonic position in the global information flow. Their dominance is especially striking as they have maintained a nearly invisible status in global media. Although that has changed to an extent in the cyber-age as these news agencies bypass the intermediaries and provide news to the people directly on the Web( All the major news agencies have well-developed websites. Reuters publishes its stories online, although they differ from those it sends to news organization, A.P.'s website links to the news reports that use its reportage) Still, not many people outside the media fraternity are aware of the role these news agencies in news production. The thought that the lion's share of the foreign affairs news being consumed by people across the world comes from a barely a few news gathering organizations like Reuters, AP and AFP is a highly unsettling one and arouses concern. This dissertation aims to quantitatively determine the reliance of the Indian English print media on wire services of Reuters and A.P. It is hypothesized that they are overly- dependent on the transnational news agencies.

The news agency dominance that this study seeks to establish in the case of Indian English newspapers is prevalent in other mass media as well, as illustrated by certain recent researches. Paterson (2011) states that most of the television news images consumed by the people come from Reuters Television, APTN (which are the visual counterparts of the wire services Reuters and AP), AFP and the other few transnational information services. Articulating on the supremacy of these news agencies in television news he notes that the "television news provided image of the world we and our government believe in and act upon is manufactured by two small set of people in rather similar newsrooms in London, the news capital of the world (which is where Reuters Television and APTN are headquartered)" (Ibid: 2011) Coming to the online medium Boyd Barrett (2010:21) articulates that there has been an unprecedented surge in the number of websites, news aggregators, blogs etc. and very few of these provide original reportage, least of all in international news. Reuters and A.P. remain the main news providers in cyberspace as well (Ibid: 38; see also Paterson, 2007) and therefore in the digitized mediascape of today, their client base has expanded. These researches juxtapose the multiplicity of the mass media outlets against the source concentration of the international coverage provided by them.

The foreign news coverage has grown both in volume and importance and this is a cumulative effect of various factors. From students studying in foreign universities to the transnational corporations having a presence in different parts of the world, global interconnectedness is manifest in every realm. More people are working and travelling abroad than ever before. A development in one part of the world



carries consequences in another. Marshall McLuhan used the metaphor “global village” to encapsulate the developments of the present times like deterritorialization and cosmopolitanism. Isolation is not only an anachronism but impossibility in contemporary times. In the words of Thomas Friedman, “the world is flat”. Globalization is a political, economic and psychological reality and has charted out a new social geography (Hjarvard, 2010: 9-10). As the advancements in information and communication technologies continue to shrink the world into McLuhan’s village the coverage of international events by the news media will acquire an even more central place.. In today’s time, there would be hardly a competitive national level publication in any part of the world that doesn’t have a section dedicated to international news.

However, as a marked contrast to this development the foreign news hole appears to be shrinking. Pamela Constable (2007), a prominent international journalist, in an analysis in the Washington Post stated that from 2002-2006, the number of foreign based U.S. correspondents had been reduced by 25% falling from 188-141. Furthermore, the number of foreign bureau maintained by the TV networks has also witnessed a decline (Ibid). As the budgets of media organizations get knifed in the economic slide, international news coverage is the first to get shrunk because of the mammoth expenses incurred in maintaining a foreign bureau and correspondents. In light of the aforementioned increasing centrality of international coverage coupled with the reductions in their own coverage make the media more dependent on the transnational news agencies.

Before investigating the extent to which Indian English newspapers depend on the newswire services, particularly Reuters and A.P., it was necessary to be acquainted with an overview of the Indian English Print journalism as well as background of these transnational news agencies, which in contemporary time have evolved into information conglomerates. Apart from the historical information on these news agencies, the literature review explains the media imperialism theory that rose to prominence during the New World Information and Communication Order debates of 1970s but gradually waned. Certain previous studies key to this project have also been outlined. Drawing from related materials and studies the literature review also brings forth evidence and arguments about this over-dependency on transnational news agencies in other parts of the developing world.

## Overview of the Indian English Print Journalism and Background Information on the Newspapers Selected

The roots of the Indian English journalism can be traced to the country's colonial past. At the time of its inception it was aimed at the British settlers in the country but later on reached out to the Indian educated elite as well. As the nationalist movement gained momentum and the press in India received an impetus and the English papers (barring those that were controlled by the British and hence strongly supported their rule) devoted themselves to galvanizing the Indian masses. Even after Independence the newspapers including the English publications continued to report of the progress made by the country in various fields and criticized those people and policies that were hindering the country's development (Karan and Mathur, 2003). However, the turning point in the India print media came in the 1990s as the government adopted pro-liberalization policies and this opened the floodgates of foreign investments, importation of advanced technology etc. Contemporarily the upper crust of Indian journalism is comprised of the top English dailies (Datta, : 48) and in step with the increasingly digitized global communication ecology, most of the English papers have launched their websites and online editions.

Before beginning the study, I thought it was pertinent to be acquainted with some background information of the three top Indian newspapers. Founded in 1838, The Times of India is owned and managed by Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd, India's largest media company. Its website states that it is the largest selling English language newspaper in the world. The daily is the market leader in Mumbai: the financial hub of the country (Indian Readership Survey, 2011). It was TOI that started the trend of marketing the newspaper like a consumer product and this later catapulted to a one of the monumental changes in the Indian publishing business(Mathur: 32-34) as other English papers followed suit as well.

The Hindustan Times owes its provenance to the Indian independence movement. It is a publication of the HT Media Ltd and is owned by the business giants Birlas.It has consistently maintained its position as the largest read newspaper in the capital Delhi which is the focal point of political activities in the country (Indian Readership Survey, 2011). The Hindu is the third newspaper whose international coverage will be analyzed in this research. It was established in 1878 as a weekly, and started publishing daily years later. It is a family-owned publication and its parent company is Kasturi and sons. Founded in Chennai, a city in Southern India, the paper maintains a strong reader base in the region. It has a reputation for high quality serious journalism.

## Historical and Background information of the News Agencies

The supremacy of Western news agencies over the supply of global news dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a cartel existed comprising of British Reuters, German Wolff and French Havas. Set up by imperial powers or closely aligned with them these transnational media organizations were the first of their kind (Herman and McChesney, 1997; Thompson, 1995). Described by Boyd-Barett (1998:26) as “an oligopolistic and hierarchical structure of the global news market” these three agencies had apportioned territories amongst themselves through agreements. In this way, this triumvirate of agencies monopolized over the circulation of international news over the globe. And this continued till the end of the Second World War. In the ensuing times the U.S. rose as a political and economic superpower and its influence greatly magnified (Hallin and Mancini: 157). Thus (2010:xvi) writes that with the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union as well as the sidelining of the global South in the global domain, USA emerged as a key agenda setter in international communication. And with it rose the American news agency Associated Press as a powerful newsgathering organization.

The cartel of the Western European news agencies was then succeeded by the ‘Big Four’: British Reuters, French AFP, and Associated Press and United Press International of the United States. After its association with the Third Reich, Wolff failed to bounce back. Havas was recreated as the Agence France Presse (AFP). AP and UPI gained a firm foothold in the global news domain as well. Pointing out that AP and UPI were not global in terms of their outlook and priorities Fenby (1986) reveals: “the home market dominates their activities..their essentially American nature has been disguised by their worldwide organization and reach.” These agencies were headquartered in the most advanced nations of the world and gradually expanded their services to include broadcast media as well. Although once it was in the same league as AP as the leading American news agencies, eventually UPI slipped into the margins. After an assessment of the contemporary information climate and media environment it appears that the competition between the wholesale providers of news has been effectively reduced to two; Reuters and AP.

Founded by the German Paul Julius Reuter in 1851, Reuters is now a leading news gathering organization. Read (1999:49) describes that “Reuters (from the 1860s -1914) was an.. imperial organization, the semi-official institution of the British Empire”. Its association with India goes back to that time, the colonial period. As the heyday of the Empire drew to a close, embracing the breakthroughs in communications technology enthusiastically Reuters reinvented itself from a national to a supranational institution. By the end of the Second World War, Reuters had begun to be regarded

as a stalwart coverer of international news for more than a century. From the American Civil War to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Reuters was the first to break the news (Tungate, 2005:223) and thereby it established a reputation of being a credible deliverer of information in real time.

Reuters is listed on both the London and New York stock exchange. It has become a lynchpin for global business and financial flow. It is a major provider of commercial information like foreign exchange rates, stock exchange prices, commodity prices etc. Its financial news services have catapulted the company's fortunes. Reuters receives only 10% of its revenues from the media organizations that subscribe to it whereas the 90% of it comes from the clients of its financial services. (Ibid: 227) Headquartered in London, the organization was acquired by the Thomson Corporation in 2008 and is now owned by Thomson Reuters

The Associated Press is a non-profit cooperative and the organization was created by the coalescing of 5 dailies and is now owned by a large number of US newspapers and radio and T.V. stations. It was established in 1848 in New York. It is sustained by the subscription fees that it charges its media clients spread all over the world. The news agency is governed by a board of directors. It operates 243 bureaus in nearly 100 countries. Most of the top US outlets have subscribed to its news gathering services. Its website mentions that on any given day more than half of the world's population consumes the news provided by AP (Associated Press, 2011). This is indicative of the status of the organization as a colossus in international news production.

Apart from Reuters and AP, another major news agency is the AFP. Headquartered in Paris, it is the oldest news agency in the world and a major wholesale news provider. Other major news agencies include the Russian Itar-Tass (which was referred to as Tass during the Soviet times) and the Xinhua press agency of the People's Republic of China. They are owned by the state and function as a governmental department. Because of this, aspersions are cast on the credibility of the information provided by them which might be false keeping in view of the associations of these countries' governments with churning out propaganda. Albeit they are used for news about respective countries Russia and China, they are seldom relied on for international news (Clausen, 2004: 18). Japan's news agencies Kyodo and Jiji are important sources of news within the country, however, their international influence remains slight (Ibid). Although the country rivals US.A and Western Europe in economic clout yet its news agencies have been eclipsed by Reuters and AP because of the language (Ibid). It is an incontrovertible fact that English is the lingua franca of the world; the language of international communications and this has further propelled the AP-Reuters duopoly.

## The MacBride Report the NWICO Debate

There was an outcry from the developing world that their reliance on the modernized nations of the North for hardware and software in the information sector as well as the alarmingly disproportionate news flow from the North to South were seriously impinging upon their own sovereignty and development. It was initiated by the non-aligned movement, which from its inception was staunchly anti-imperialist. It comprised of the newly independent nation states which were former colonies like Burma, India, Panama, Pakistan, Cameroon etc. and others like Egypt, Argentina Yugoslavia. In the subsequent meetings and conferences of the non-aligned nations in Algiers (1973) regarded as the “birthplace of the new world information order” (Galtung and Vincent, 1992: 82) and Tunis(1975) in which it was resolved to “obtain decolonization of information”(Ibid) the movement gained more momentum.

In response UNESCO established the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems in 1979. It was chaired by Nobel Prize laureate Sean MacBride. The MacBride Commission as it came to be known produced a report titled “Many Voices, One World” which expatiated upon the existing flaws in international communication. It criticized the Western wire services for their lack of reporting on Third World issues (Thussu, 2000: 33).Amongst the 82 recommendations the MacBride Report presented, it laid a paramount emphasis on the “free flow and a better and wider balanced dissemination of information” (MacBride Commission, 2004: 87). The proposals it presented called for a new world information and communication order abbreviated as NWICO.

A key development that shed light on the issue of information imbalances between the industrialized and developing world that tilted asymmetrically towards the former and also brought forth the role played by the transnational agencies in perpetuating the inequalities was the NWICO debate of the 1970s. It opened a vista for the people who make up the majority of the world’s population whose news is often discussed by experts of major industrialized countries to seek representation in the media on an equal footing as the others (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1998: 97-98). It declared that the global order of information was critically lacking and there were rectifications to be made to equalize the First World-Third World news exchange.

However, the MacBride Commission’s proposals were decried and not surprisingly a colossal barrage of criticism came from the developed world especially the United States. They stated that the many protectionist proposals in the Report tightened the leash of the governments over the media thereby

playing to the advantage of statist and authoritarian regimes seeking ways for disallowing foreign journalists to report on their land about their despotism and improper governance. The document was even labeled as socialistic. Even the UNESCO was vilified. American antagonism towards the MacBride Report culminated in its withdrawal from UNESCO in 1984. This was ensued by UK leaving the organization the next year. It later rejoined the UN agency in 1997 and the US in 2003.

The MacBride Report and the NWICO debates couldn't accomplish as much as they were intended to. The developed world's antithesis to the proposals was but one cause of its failure. There was a lack of cohesion and sincere commitment to free and open information structures among the non-aligned nations as well. However, the issues the debate brought into focus like the Western news agencies' relegation of the Third World issues and news into the margins and the need of the democratization of international media remain pertinent till today.

### **Media Imperialism Theory**

The concern over journalists' high dependence over these news agencies is encompassed in the theory of media imperialism. The original theoretical definition of this concept was given by Boyd Barrett (1980:145) who stated that media imperialism is "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected." This definition, essentially, points towards a media environment of unidirectional news flow i.e. information streams from one bloc of nations to another but not the other way around: from the developed and modernized states to the developing ones. The major wholesale provider of news from abroad for print and broadcast mass media continue to be a very limited number of news agencies, the likes of Reuters, AP and AFP, headquartered in London, New York and Paris.

Because it is believed that media is inextricably entwined with cultural processes, the distinction between the terms media imperialism and cultural imperialism is faint. However, Tomlinson(1991) argues that the former is one of the dimensions by which the culture dominates the other. But it will not be delved into in detail as it is beyond the scope of this dissertation and the focus shall be on the way in which international media institutions, especially, the new agencies subordinate the information apparatuses of other developing countries and legitimate their domination. This results of this study will

also show whether the issues raised in the media imperialism theory of information inequities between the developed and developing countries remain pertinent in contemporary times or not.

### **Dominance of News Agencies in other parts of the world**

The lack of an independent coverage of foreign affairs isn't only a disconcerting and alarming issue in India or the Asian sub-continent but there is concrete evidence put forward by communication scholars that this dependency of national media on transnational agencies is prevalent in other parts of the developing world as well."The Latin American press sees news through foreign eyes, having to buy most of its international news from Western wire services"( Matta,1979:251)As a consequence of this, they end up giving priority to those developments that receive prominence by these news agencies and sideline those events that are not considered important by them. Matta(1979:253) cites a study of the coverage of the independence of a Latin American country Surinam in the newspapers of the region. Not only did the event receive minuscule coverage in the publications of the neighboring countries, the reporting was a mere regurgitation of the agency dispatches. Coupling this with a climate of violence and intimidation, the journalists face working in Latin America (Garrison and Munoz, 1986), a picture emerges of a media system which is greatly impinged upon, doesn't provide plurality of perspectives and is reduced to reproducing the stories sent by the international news agencies.

A similar state of affairs of the subordination of national media to international news agencies, as stated above, is prevalent in Africa. Quite often, the only reporting on the happenings of a neighbor that the media of an African country provides is what is receives from London(Reuters) or Paris (AFP) (Hafez, 2007: 147).Like Latin America, political turmoil and authoritarian regimes, technological backwardness, a fragile law and order situation and the like hazards in covering the African continent make the media organizations wary of dispatching their own correspondents for on-the-field reporting. Rather, they are further inclined towards using the story sent by the wire services. When the people of a country learn about the developments taking place in a neighbor through the big global agencies, this essentially implies they are getting news from next door through the conduit of an organization that is headquartered thousands of miles away.

Also, the coverage of the Third World by these global agencies is skewed and perpetuates stereotypes. Mohammed "Mo" Amin a noted African photojournalist who extensively covered the various conflicts in the continent in the 1970s and whose photographs were often carried by the Western media in an interview with Paterson in 1995(cited in Paterson, 1998:91-92)) said that "all (the editors at

Visnews/Reuters) they want out of Africa is death, blood, famine, corruption, and all that. We've got plenty of that in Africa-there's no shortage of that. But we've also got a hell of a lot more stuff in Africa which is much more important to the continent than the various wars going on."The dependence on a highly limited number of global news agencies doesn't only give the people of the country whose media system is reliant, news from a perspective that is not their own but also puts forward a distorted picture of that part of the world to the international audience.

"Only the spectacular, bizarre or the truly horrific" (Harrison and Palmer, 1986:82) in Africa makes it to the radar of the global media. This applies to most of the developing world including India. Because this coverage doesn't provide the people context in which to place these exceptional stories (Harrison and Palmer,82) they believe that the developing parts of the world are "places where things happen all of a sudden and in an unpredictable way" (Galtung and Ruge,1965:286). Because of the sporadic coverage of the tumultuous events in the developing world, the people completely miss the political undercurrents. The foreign news coverage lacks an interpretive framework and this can be illustrated with the example of the recent political upheaval and mass demonstrations in Egypt. The coverage by the news agencies, publications, broadcast and online media was overwhelming. However, before the protests, the correspondents completely missed the mounting frustration among Egyptian populace and other factors like Mubarak's policies which catalyzed the situation.

### **Important studies in the field**

The preponderance of news agencies isn't only prevalent in conventional mainstream media like print as this dissertation sets out to investigate but some studies have empirically evidenced to the online media's lack of original reporting as well. One of such works includes Paterson's(2007) article on "International News on the Internet: Why more is less" which serves as a precedent for this dissertation. This work is especially striking as it dispels the notion of the World Wide Web being a messiah for free public expression and offering a cornucopia of information. It was found that the major internet news aggregators like AOL, Yahoo and Altavista simply publish agency dispatches on their websites. The research indicated that "discourse on international events of consequence within the global public sphere is substantially determined by the production practices and institutional priorities of two information services- Reuters and Associated Press" (Paterson,2007:63).

What an international news story means for a country like India might be entirely distinct from what its fallouts might be on another. Presenting a story from the viewpoint of every nation isn't possible.



However, the online media should strive to bring forth a wide range of perspectives through original reporting and link to diverse but relevant news reports.

A nearly total reliance of the public for news on merely two information conglomerates has another serious repercussion. It limits and homogenizes public discourse and doesn't allow a gamut of issues to be available for public consideration (Paterson, 2001:89). Countering the argument that globalization has led to the homogenization of media and cultural products including international news, Clausen (2004) asserts, in the case of broadcast news, that although the retail media depend on transnational news agencies for world news, they use it as a raw material and culturally adapt it in keeping with their national audience. This leads to localization or domestication of global news products. However, after conducting a study on television newscasts over a two-day period in 1995, Paterson (2011:33) that in a large portion of the news footage analyzed, there was minimal editing done by the national broadcasters. This might make economic sense for them because they pay for the news agencies' services, however, the retail media end up depending considerably on the editorial judgments of these news organizations (Ibid). Also, even if national media outlets select those angles that are pertinent to the country from the news provided by these information services (as the proponents of the localization claim they do) their choices are limited to the news agencies' reportage. The actual content is still coming from the wholesale news providers. Therefore the claims that global news is "localized" are highly debatable. Coming to the print media, because of the absence of the audio-visual elements, there is a lesser scope of localizing the news and a greater propensity of the retail media towards transcribing agency dispatches word for word.

A hard-hitting study key to this project has been that of Justin Lewis "The Quality and Independence of British Journalism". The project analyzed some of the most reputed newspaper titles like the Guardian, Independent, Times, Telegraph as well as the tabloid Daily Mail and found that in nearly half of the news stories researched the key facts and quotations included could be traced mainly or wholly to the wires (Lewis, 2008: 15). The study also found a large percentage of PR material in the news. Manning's (2008) research on Press Association (U.K's national news agency) found that changes such as increasingly commercialized news priorities and commodification of information that were hitherto associated with international news agencies are now affecting national news agencies as well and the P.A. reporters are drawing their stories from a limited number of news sources like agency copy and press releases.

The practice of news organizations of developing countries drawing most of their international stories from wire cables can still be partly attributed to a lack of resources. However, the findings of

Lewis' (2008) and Manning's (2008) study clearly reinstates that this is prevalent in a developed country like the U.K. as well. This can either be because of a lackadaisical approach among journalists that disinclines them towards on-the field-reporting or a momentous increase in their workload as Davies (2009) argues. Both compromise the quality of journalism

### **A near-absolute dependence on wire services: a critical analysis**

Notwithstanding their transnational and transcendent character, these news agencies are undeniably Western institutions that follow the Anglo-Saxon model of journalism. They project themselves as being divorced from their national setups aware of the importance of this in their continuing progress as an international business. However, they retain their close linkages with particular countries namely the UK (Reuters) and USA (A.P.) (Boyd-Barrett, 1998). News agencies "manufacture a bland and homogenous but still ideologically distinctive view of the world, stories challenging the ideological positions of the dominant political players (in agency eyes US and the UK) receive little attention" (Paterson, 2007:60-61). The outlook and worldview of these Western news agencies is distinct from that that is required by the people in the developing world to completely understand the processes of development taking place in their countries and grasp the background and history behind those events.

The reliance on the news agencies like Reuters and AP, for news of a nearby region by the media of a developing country has another pitfall; that of missing out on stories which might have held relevance for them simply because they were not covered by the agencies. Slightly less than a third of the agency journalists and stringers are spread over North America, nearly the same number in Europe and about a third cover the rest of the world which includes Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America (Ginnekan, 1998:131). This is all the more startling in the light of the fact that the lion's share of the world population lives in the regions with the fewest correspondents. Expressing his bewilderment at some media institutions that have reporters designated as the Africa correspondent or the Middle East correspondent, Hannerz (2004:1) asks: How does one handle the responsibility of covering a continent or some large chunk of it. One needn't be a communications expert to know that the number of reporters stationed in the developing world by the news agencies is insufficient and it wouldn't be possible for them to cover every newsworthy event. This suggests that a great acreage of life in the developing countries simply remains untouched by reporters. This again underscores that the importance of an independent international affairs coverage is all the more for a developing nation like India.

It is not just the journalistic institutions of developing countries that have an excessive reliance on these news agencies but the media of the First World countries instead of dispatching their own correspondents to the scene of the event simply regurgitate the news agency copy with slight changes. Davies(2009) sheds light on the British media environment arguing that the journalists routinely publish the news circulated by Press Association, UK's national news agency without working on the stories themselves. Lewis'(2008) and Manning(2008) have provided empirical evidence to prove this as aforementioned. Similarly, Associated Press continues to be the de facto determiner of global reportage that is published in US newspapers (Hess, 1996:93). In 1996 it provided foreign reportage to a staggering 97% of the 1,600 dailies of the country(Ibid: 91).It would be safe to assume that that percentage has only shot up since then. This is especially unsettling and disconcerting in the light of the fact that that America and Western European countries have one of the best developed and technologically sophisticated media systems and possess the resources for in-depth foreign news coverage.

The news stories that the media organizations receive from the agencies aren't closely checked by the reporters. Boyd-Barett(1980:18) explains that because the scene where the event has occurred is too far removed to be verified by local correspondent and it is assumed the story would have been checked by the journalists at the news agency, news reports that are circulated by the big global news agencies are regarded to be 'institutionally verified'. Without much investigation of their veracity, the stories are published and broadcast. Speaking with regard to Press Association as the main conveyor belt that supplies news to UK's national media, Davies(2009:79) points out that BBC, an organization considered to be stickler for accuracy mentions categorically in its internal guidelines that PA news stories are exempt from the system of rigorous checking it mandates for its other news items..

Illustrating the near-absolute dependence of media organizations on global news agencies for setting their international news agenda, Hannerz(2004:168) states that many a time the editor of a publication or broadcast channel might refrain from approving a story unless the news agencies have covered it as well. Similarly, if a major agency reports a story that the foreign correspondent of the media company looked over, the latter would have some explanations to give to the editor. (Ibid) This influence of the news agencies on the editors' evaluation of their own reporters' work is one of the most striking features of their agenda –setting role. (Boyd-Barett, 1980:21) These newsroom practices reflect that nearly everything that the transnational agencies state and report is regarded to be the gospel truth.

Apart from the sizeable proportion of international news the agencies provide to their client countries, a "more subtle influence which is often alleged the agencies exercise is upon the judgments which client

media make about the relative weight or importance of different kinds of news” (Boyd-Barett, 1980: 19). In this way, the global news agencies maneuver the outlook of the mass media organizations vis-à-vis their news gathering, the resources they disburse to events, the importance they lay on the various international news stories etc. They select the news to be covered by the media. If journalistic institutions depend profusely on just two news agencies, Reuters and AP, then this is indicative of the colossal agenda-setting power they have vested in the latter.

The people of the country would comprehend international happenings better if they are presented from the Indian perspective. Articulating on the Indian perspective in journalism, Sonwalker (2009: 378) writes that the element of chaos and diversity are interspersed in the life in India. India has a wide range of people and this diverseness of the country’s population is manifest in the various sub-cultures prevalent, different faiths followed and languages spoken. The global news agencies, on the other hand, construct a standardized news product (Boyd-Barett, 1980: 19). This one size fits all approach is not congruous with the pluralism of the Indian society. And the importance of the Indian perspective in foreign news is further heightened in the case of stories from the developing Asian countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan etc. because as mentioned in the literature review these nations as well as India are in a state of flux. Their social landscapes are undergoing various changes. Therefore, foreign news, especially that involves neighboring and nearby Asian countries must be appropriately contextualized for the diverse Indian readers. The news agencies cannot be expected to do so because of their transnational nature and worldwide operations, however, the Indian English dailies should.

## METHODOLOGY

### Aims, Objectives And Research Question

**AIMS:** It is hypothesized in this research that the Indian English newspapers are overly dependent on international news agencies for news from around the world. And this will be tested through the quantitative content analysis.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

To determine whether the international news stories of the dailies are originally written reports underpinned on diverse sources or a mere replication of the story sent out by the wires.

To gauge which newspaper out of the ones selected prioritizes its coverage of world events and doesn't merely echo the reporting of the global news agencies.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What is the verbatim use of the stories of news agencies like Reuters and AP by the top Indian English newspapers in international news reports and which one of them relies on the agency copy the least.

### Research Methods

The originality and independence of Indian English newspapers' international journalism will be analyzed by conducting quantitative content analysis. The definition of which put forward by Riffe et al encapsulates the main features of the research approach succinctly. Quantitative content analysis can be defined as the compartmentalization of communication texts into categories defined and constructed by the researcher and the analysis of the relationships between these categories using statistical techniques (Riffe et al, 2005:3). Wimmer and Dominick (2006) state that because content analysis is quantitative it allows the researchers to obtain precision in the results. The statement that 80% of the news story is derived from the wire cables conveys a greater exactitude than the one that states a large portion of the story is a duplication of the agency copy. Empirical evidence lends greater credence to an argument. This is also an advantage over qualitative techniques.

Tracing agency content in news stories and ferreting out the matches between them and the newsfeed of the wires manually is time-consuming and difficult. So, keeping the aims and objectives of the research in mind, plagiarism detection software was decided against to perform the comparison between the publications' stories and the agencies'. The soft-ware would determine the verbatim use of the agency copy in the newspapers' international reports. WCopyfind\_2.7 was zeroed in on as it is extremely easy to use and compares texts for matches within seconds. Developed by Professor Lou Bloomfield of the University of Virginia an earlier version was also used by Paterson (2006) in his research to determine the dependence of online news aggregators on international news agencies. It is a free soft-ware and can be downloaded from <http://plagiarism.phys.virginia.edu/Wsoftware.html>. It essentially scours a collection of text documents for similar words. In this case, the newspaper's story will be compared against the associated Reuters story and then with the AP newsfeed. Copyfind conducts the comparison elegantly as it generates HTML documents whereby the user can examine the pair of documents side-by-side containing the text with matching phrases underlined. Certain parameters like the minimum number of words in a phrase which is the shortest string of text wCopyfind can regard as a true match are user-defined. By default it is 6 so that, as Paterson (2006) mentions long names or common expressions don't interfere with the findings.

The software Copyfind after analyzing the texts enumerates the percentage of the perfectly matching words that have been found in the pair of documents. If the comparison between the international news story of the publication and that of the news agencies returns a high percentage, it implies that the report shares a large amount of text with the wires services' story and it is a mere duplication of the latter. This would establish that the newspaper has done little original reporting on the story. However, if no comparison links are listed, it indicates that the information in the story including the key facts quotations etc. have been gathered from different sources and not just replicated from the wires' newsfeed. It would be clear from this analysis that the newspaper with the highest number of stories that match the associated Reuters and AP content is the one that is simply regurgitating the wire services' reportage.

Content Analysis is a multi-stage method and comprises of the following steps

- Defining the universe, selecting the sample of media texts to be analyzed and the units of analysis
- Doing a Pilot Study

- Conducting the analysis
- Analyzing the results
- Drawing conclusions

### **Defining the Universe**

So that the sample reflects the international news consumed by a large share of the Indian population and is representative of the India English print media, the three most widely read newspapers have been selected. To shortlist the publications, the Indian Readership Survey was referred to. It is one of the largest surveys of its kind in the country and is conducted twice a year. The top three English dailies in 2010 were Times of India, Hindustan Times and the Hindu with readership figures of (in lakhs or hundred thousand) 70.35, 34.67 and 21.59 respectively.

### **Selecting the sample**

Studying all the relevant content for the research is impractical. Therefore, a sample or subset of units is selected from the population for the analysis which is representative of it (Riffe et al, 2005: 95). For selecting the sample, the random sampling technique has been zeroed in on. In this the sample is randomly chosen i.e. selected entirely by chance. It is favored as it reduces bias significantly. However, because of the random selection procedure it might not ensure proper representation of the population.

The stories that are going to be analyzed will be from the international section of the three newspapers thereby excluding editorials and columns on global events. Also news of “mega-stories” like the Iraq War and the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan are not going to be included in the sample because these happenings are covered extensively because of their monumental significance. Stories of international sporting events published in the Sports Section of the newspapers have been left out from the selection.

### **Selecting the time frame**

The international stories in the newspapers will be selected during a time frame of one month, in July 2011 beginning from 01.07.2011 to 31.07.2011. The week starts from Monday and Sunday is the last day. It is important for the researcher to spread out the vector of time to avoid inaccuracies and distortion in the findings which might occur due to unanticipated and one-off happenings.

### **Units of Analysis**

This can be defined as the smallest unit the sample can be narrowed down to. It is imperative that the unit of analysis be clearly defined. If its definition is nebulous and unclear it might lead to errors in selection of the stories and distort the results of the analysis. So in this study the unit of analysis is an international news story in the World Section of the three newspapers.

## Pilot Study

A pilot study is carried out on a smaller sub-sample to test the research procedures and bring forward any errors and limitations that might prevent the analysis from yielding an accurate result. For the pilot study, two news stories from each of the three newspapers were selected during a time period from 20-06-2011 to 27-06-2011. So the preliminary analysis was conducted on 6 news stories. They were compared with the Reuters and AP copy. The AP news reports circulated to the media organizations that subscribe to it were accessed through the Nexis database. Because the Reuters feed was unavailable, its news stories were downloaded from the website of the agency. However, it deliberately doesn't put out the same information it circulates to other journalistic institutions as it derives its profit from providing real-time news to mass media outlets. Also, the bylines of the story, whether they were attributed to the newspaper correspondents or agencies, were not a criterion in the selection of the stories and they were only looked at when the comparisons were computed.

The stories of the newspaper were downloaded from the international/world section of their digital editions on their respective websites. The following are the results of the pilot study

NEWSPAPER	STORY	DATE	PERCENTAGE OF VERBATIM USE OF	
			REUTERS	AP
TIMES OF INDIA	Suicide bomber couple attack police station in Pakistan	27.06.11	----	92
	NATO admits to civilian casualties in Tripoli	20.06.11	100	----
HINDU	Earthquake in Indonesia	26.06.11	----	92
	Ban-ki-moon's second term as UN Secy-General	22.06.11	----	81
HINDUSTAN TIMES	Hacking group LulzSec disbands	26.06.11	----	----



	Cell-phone of Osama's aide provides clues	25.06.11	-----	35
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A sample comprising of 6 news stories is too small for an accurate representation of the population. Therefore, the results of the pilot study cannot be considered a true reflection of the trends in Indian English print media towards a dependence on “pre-packaged” or “ready-made news”. However, it can be used to gain an idea of their reliance on the wires. It is clearly indicated from the table that most of the stories are mere duplications of the wire copy. The story “NATO admits to civilian deaths in Tripoli air strike” that appeared in the International Section of the Times of India was an exact copy of the Reuters story. This implies that the correspondent hadn’t even made minor changes to it. Also although no plagiarism was detected in the story “LulzSec lulls to sleep” that appeared in Hindustan Times on 26.06.2011, it was attributed to another transnational agency AFP. This again underscores the dominance of a few global news agencies in international journalism. Another news report “Seized phone offers clues to Osama’s Pakistan links” had a 35 % perfect match with the AP story. This might not be much. However, the story, as mentioned, was written by the newspaper reporters. This exemplifies that AP news copy served as the major source of the story and little effort was undertaken to explore other angles and refer to different sources. The outcome of this pilot study shows that the almost all of the news stories in the sample are wholly or mainly from these wire services. This will be confirmed by the detailed content analysis that follows.

One of the limitations that the pilot-study brought to the fore was the difficulty in detecting plagiarism in instances when the agency story wasn’t copied blatantly. The journalist might conceal his complete reliance on wire cables by simply rewording phrases and sentences or by making slight changes in the sequence of facts and quotation in writing the story and present it as an original piece. The software Copyfind simply looks for matching words in the pair of documents. It cannot ferret out the clandestine and subtle replication of the agency copy. However, by perusing the story in the newspaper and also the corresponding Reuters or A.P. one can ascertain that the journalist has done little research on the story or looked for different sources and angles. However, because of the software there wasn’t empirical evidence to corroborate this.

For, the main study from each newspaper 30 news stories were selected in accordance with the random sampling technique; 20 were from around the world and 10 exclusively from the Asian continent. The

data set of 10 news reports also included the stories involving Indian abroad. The stories appeared in the newspapers' editions and were published on their websites in the month of July. This was done to examine the extent of dependence of the newspapers on transnational news agencies when it came to development taking place within neighbors and other countries located nearby. This was followed by a search for the Reuters and A.P. content that related to those news pieces. Then the report of the newspaper along with the corresponding Reuters' story and AP newsfeed were downloaded and saved. This was followed by running a comparison between them though Copyfind. The results of the content analysis have been collated in the "Findings" section of this dissertation that follows.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Following are the findings of the content analysis conducted during the month of July, 2011. The international news stories of Times of India, The Hindu and Hindustan Times were compared against the associated Reuters and A.P. content. As mentioned in the Methodology section 30 foreign news stories were selected from the three dailies out of which 10 were from Asia or concerned Indians living overseas. The first table for each newspaper given below lists the stories from around the globe and the second includes news reports of developments exclusively from Asia and those involving Indians abroad.

### TIMES OF INDIA

#### INTERNATIONAL NEWS STORIES

SNO.	NEWS STORY	DATE	VERBATIM USAGE OF NEWS AGENCY COPY	
			REUTERS	A.P
1.	MSNBC suspends political analyst over 'd***' comment about Obama	1.07.2011	-----	86
2.	U.S. calls for resignation of UN expert over Blog cartoon	9.07.2011	-----	-----
3.	Wikileaks' Assange in .U.K court extradition appeal	12.07.2011	74	-----
4.	ISI Chief heads to U.S. as ties nosedive	14.07.2011	-----	-----
5.	Rebekah Brooks resigns	15.07.2011	96	-----
6.	FBI to probe news Corp over allegations of attempts to hack phones of 9/11 victims	15.07.2011	92	-----
7.	News groups rush to fill in NoW demise	16.07.2011	86	-----
8.	Final Potter wields big wand	17.07.2011	84	-----

	at the box office			
9.	12 million children wish Nelson Mandela Happy Birthday	18.07.2011	-----	92
10.	Hugo Chavez to run in 2012 presidential election	19.07.2011	-----	85
11.	Assad loyalists kill 10 people in attacks on Homs	19.07.2011	98	-----
12.	U.S. busts Kashmir racket GhulamNabi Fai lobbyist spy	20.07.2011	-----	-----
13.	Strauss-Kahn accusers' attorneys meets NYC prosecutors	20.07.2011	-----	98
14.	Atlantis has landed, ending NASA's shuttle era	21.07.2011	96	-----
15.	Greece gets new bailout with private sector help	22.07.2011	-----	91
16.	Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri hails Syrian protestors	28.07.2011	92	-----
17.	Mubarak refuses to eat food as his trial approaches	28.07.2011	-----	-----
18.	Somalia's Al-Shabab recruits Americans	28.07.2011	95	-----
19.	16 killed in Ukraine mine blast	29.07.2011	-----	99
20.	Mubarak's August 03 trial to be held in Cairo, protestors sceptical	31.07.2011	97	-----

NEWS STORIES FROM ASIA

SNo.	NEWS STORY	DATE	VERBATIM USE OF NEWS AGENCY COPY	
			REUTERS	AP
21.	Thaksin party wins election by a landslide	03.07.2011	70	-----
22.	'Hakimullah isolated losing Taliban control'	06.07.2011	91	-----
23.	Japan nuclear plants to undergo "stress tests"	06.07.2011	-----	97
24.	North Korea paid Pakistan for Nuclear tech, says A.Q. Khan	07.07.2011	-----	96
25.	1,000 arrested in Malaysia democracy protest/AFP	09.07.2011	-----	-----
26.	Volcano erupts in Indonesia	15.07.2011	93	-----
27.	Bomb blasts overshadow Hillary Clinton's india visit/AFP	17.07.2011	-----	-----
28.	HinaRabbaniKhar is the new Pakistani Foreign Minister	18.07.2011	-----	-----
29.	14 dead in Xinjiang	20.07.2011	-----	99
30.	China's effort to muzzle news of train crash sparks outcry	26.07.2011	77	-----

## HINDUSTAN TIMES

### INTERNATIONAL NEWS STORIES

S.No.	NEWS STORY	DATE	VERBATIM USAGE OF NEWS AGENCY COPY	
			REUTERS	A.P.
1.	Russian lawyer's death provokes dispute	05.07.2011	----	93
2.	U.S. cuts 800 million aid to Pakistan	10.07.2011	87	----
3.	Julian Assange back in court to fight extradition	12.07.2011	----	81
4.	Murdoch says sorry over hacking, Brooks quits	15.07.2011	98	----
5.	U.S. slammed after Obama, Dalai meet	17.07.2011	94	----
6.	Nelson Mandela turns 93	18.07.2011	----	----
7.	2 held in US for running outfit funded by PAK	19.07.2011	----	----
8.	Sunday Mirror gains on Murdoch tabloid demise	20.07.2011	86	----
9.	Murdoch dynasty in doubt	20.07.2011	----	75
10.	Libyan troops kill 8 rebels	20.07.2011	----	95
11.	Al-Qaeda plans recruiting film for children	21.07.2011	----	93
12.	The addict is dead	25.07.2011	----	----
13.	Maid wants Strauss-Kahn jailed	25.07.2011	92	----
14.	Norwegian killer embarrasses Putin	26.07.2011	97	----
15.	Syrian troops kill 95 in Hama/AFP	31.07.2011	----	----
16.	N.Korea demands peace treaty with U.S.	27.07.2011	----	94

17.	'Mubarak refuses food, extremely weak'/AFP	27.07.2011	----	----
18.	Security Chief: Norway attacks work of lone wolf	28.07.2011	----	99
19.	Ukrainian mine blast kills 16	29.07.2011	93	----
20.	Airstrikes kill 40 pro-government Yemeni tribesman	31.07.2011	----	97

#### NEWS STORIES FROM ASIA

S.No.	NEWS STORY	DATE	VERBATIM USAGE OF NEWS AGENCY COPY	
			REUTERS	A.P.
21.	18 killed in 2 attacks in NW China	01.07.2011	----	99
22.	'Thaksin party wins election by a landslide', Thailand	03.07.2011	86	----
23.	Oz pub ejects Sikh man for wearing turban /AFP	04.07.2011	----	----
24.	More than 500 arrested in protests, Malaysia	09.07.2011	93	----
25.	Violence in Karachi	14.07.2011	98	----
26.	Pakistan looms large as Hillary Clinton flies to India	18.07.2011	96	----
27.	Police gun down rioters in Xinjiang	18.07.2011	----	----
28.	Pakistan set to get youngest and first woman foreign minister	18.07.2011	----	----
29.	China seeks to muzzles reporting on high speed train crash	26.07.2011	87	----
30.	7 Filipino marines killed, 21 wounded in clash in Manila	28.07.2011	----	98

## THE HINDU

### INTERNATIONAL NEWS STORIES

S.No.	NEWS STORY	DATE	VERBATIM USE OF NEWS AGENCY COPY	
			REUTERS	A.P.
1.	Russia sets up Arctic forces	2.07.2011	-----	90
2.	Lagarde takes up IMF post/AFP	6.07.2011	-----	-----
3.	Nearly 100 missing as boat sinks in Russia's Volga river	10.07.2011	-----	-----
4.	Assange back in court to fight extradition	12.07.2011	-----	95
5.	Rebekah Brooks resigns	15.07.2011	-----	83
6.	Gaddafi government holds talks with U.S. officials	15.07.2011	-----	90
7.	U.S. recognizes Libyan opposition	15.07.2011	-----	-----
8.	Nelson Mandela celebrates 93 <sup>rd</sup> birthday	18.07.2011	-----	88
9.	NoW whistleblower found dead	20.07.2011	-----	96
10.	Parts of south Somalia suffering from famine: U.N.	20.07.2011	-----	80
11.	Installing new centrifuges: Iran	20.07.2011	-----	88
12.	Serbia arrests last war crime fugitives	21.07.2011	-----	91
13.	New moon around Pluto	21.07.2011	-----	----
14.	Oslo attacks suspect says he acted alone	24.07.2011	-----	83



15.	BSkyB board under pressure over James Murdoch roe	27.07.2011	-----	92
16.	Breivik praises Putin too	27.07.2011	-----	-----
17.	Chavez celebrates 57 <sup>th</sup> birthday; proposes summit	28.07.2011	-----	89
18.	Senate confirms Mueller for a new term as FBI head	28.07.2011	-----	89
19.	Eight U.K. newspapers forces to pay libel charges	29.07.2011	-----	-----
20.	Heavy Syrian assault in Hama	31.07.2011	-----	92

#### NEWS STORIES FROM ASIA

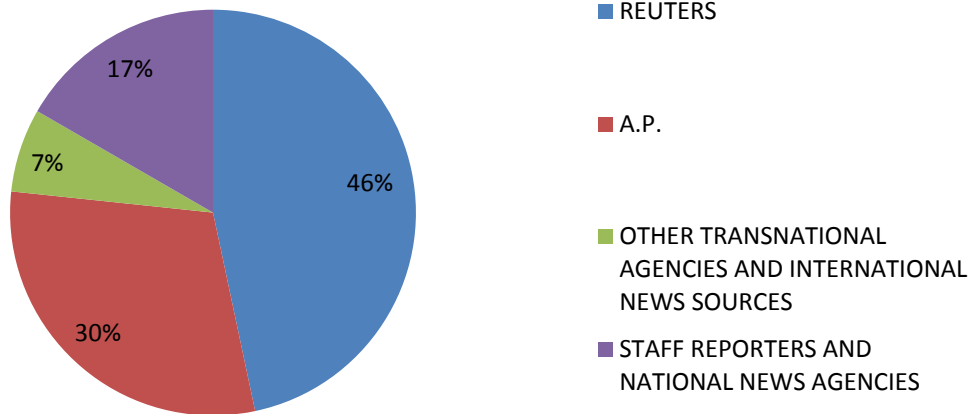
S.No	NEWS STORY	DATE	VERBATIM USE OF NEWS AGENCY COPY	
			REUTERS	A.P.
			-----	-----
21.	Yingluck forms Thai coalition	04.07.2011	-----	-----
22.	Volcano in Indonesia	18.07.2011	-----	87
23.	PPP leaders comments on MQM set Karachi ablaze	14.07.2011	-----	-----
24.	Violence in Xinjiang	19.07.2011	-----	91
25.	Hillary arrives for strategic talks	19.07.2011	-----	-----
26.	Afghan officer killed as Taliban attack police station/DPA	20.07.2011	-----	-----
27.	China executes vice-mayors for corruption	20.07.2011	-----	95
28.	Sri Lanka local body elections	24.07.2011	-----	-----

29.	Kandahar mayor assassinated	27.07.2011	-----	-----
30.	Signal failure to blame for accident	29.07.2011	-----	90

After the content analysis the bylines of the news reports selected were also examined. This was done to gain an understanding of the various sources of international news stories appearing in the three English dailies selected: the Times of India, Hindustan Times and the Hindu. The sources were broadly compartmentalized into four categories: Reuters, A.P. (the percentage of verbatim usage of these two news services' copy was shown by the content analysis) other transnational news agencies and international news sources ( this includes AFP( another leading transnational news agency) New York Times Service, international publications like the Guardian etc.) and staff correspondents and national news agencies. Combining the findings of the content analysis with the information gathered from perusing the bylines of the news stories, a clearer picture emerged about where the foreign news in the papers is coming from and following the results of the analysis for each of three dailies accompanied by pie chart representations of the various sources of international news.

After comparing the stories of Times of India with the associated reports of global news agencies, it was found that 14 of 30 news reports (46%) were exact duplications of the Reuters s, 9/30(30%) were nearly complete rewrites of A.P wire and in 8 news stories comprising of 30% of the data set Copyfind didn't detect any perfect matches between them and the corresponding Reuters and AP feed within the parameters defined. In those 8 stories which did not contain a large percentage of Reuters and A.P. content, 2 stories were from AFP, and the other 6 were attributed to staff correspondents and national news agencies. **In Times of India, a total of 76% of the foreign news stories selected came either from Reuters or A.P**

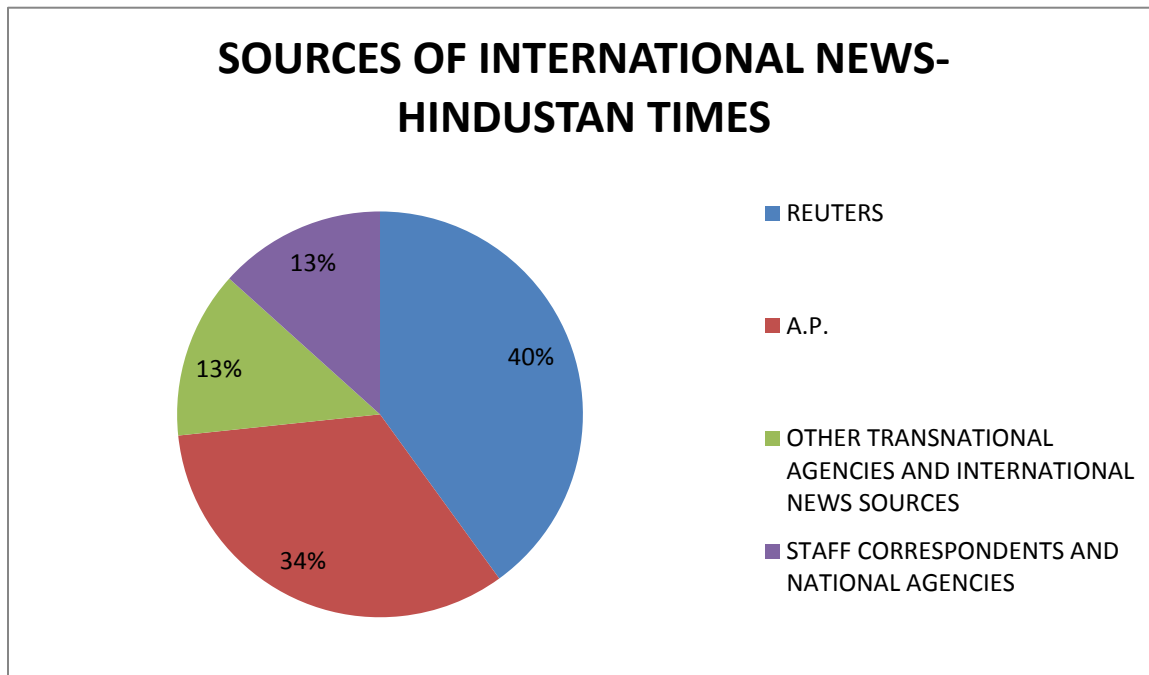
## SOURCES OF INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES- TIMES OF INDIA



The above mentioned information is a report on the findings on all the 30 Times of India stories selected. Now coming to the news reports exclusively of developments in the Asian continent, out of the 10 news pieces in the data sample, 4 were completely derived from Reuters, 3 from A.P. 2 were AFP stories and in only 1 story (“HinaRabbaniKhar is the news Pakistani Foreign Minister”-18.07.2011) agency content was not traced and was attributed to a staff correspondent. This indicates that the Indian daily’s coverage of occurrences in the same continent is highly dependent on the international information services.

In Hindustan Times, 12 of 30 stories matched the associated Reuters material which translates to 40% of the news reports selected, 10/30(33%) had been derived from the A.P. newswire. **This implies that in a total of 73% of the data set came from these two transnational agencies and the news copy.** Only 8 stories i.e. 26% of the data sample comprised of those news stories that weren’t completely derived from the agency feed. In those news reports, 4 were attributed to AFP and the remaining half were from

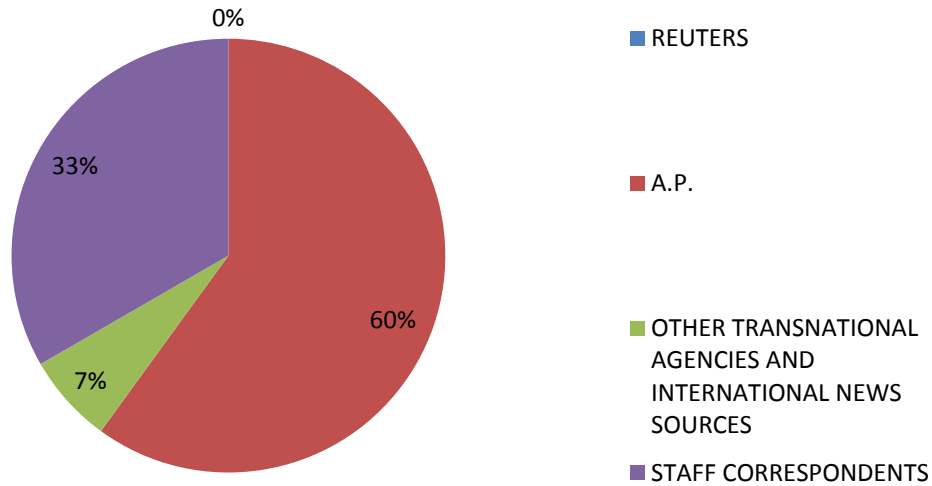
staff correspondents and national news agencies.



Analyzing the results returned by Coyfind for the new stories from Asia it was found that in the 10 stories selected 5 contained a high percentage of Reuters' news content and 2 perfectly matched the corresponding AP story. 2 news reports ("Police gun down rioters in Xinjiang" and "Pakistan set to get youngest and first woman foreign minister" both dated 18.07.2011) didn't match the associated stories of the two global wholesale news providers nor were accredited to another transnational agency. They were acknowledged to have been written by the newspaper's reporters.

In the Hindu out of the 30 foreign news reports selected that were published during the month of July, 18 showed a high verbatim usage of the corresponding A.P. copy. **This translates to of the 60% of the data set.** No news story matched the associated Reuters report nor was attributed to the news agency. This clearly indicates that the daily does not subscribe to the news services of Reuters. 2 news stories were categorized under "other international sources" And the rest of the 16 news pieces that the software did not detect large traces of agency content in were accredited to the paper's correspondents. **This shows that the Hindu in comparison to the Times of India and Hindustan Times is lesser reliant on agency copy for foreign news.**

## SOURCES OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS- HINDU



In case of the Hindu's coverage of happenings in Asia, 3 stories were found to have been derived from the A.P. The comparison between the paper's news reports and the associated Reuters' stories showed that no story contained a large amount of content from the news agency. 1 story (Afghan officer killed as Taliban attack police station) was attributed to another global wholesale news provider, the DPA, which is Germany's news agency and has major worldwide operations. Information about the DPA has been mentioned in the literature review as well. The others were bylined to staff correspondents. This shows that its coverage of Asia is comparatively more independent than the other two newspapers.

After perusing the bylines of all the 90 news stories it was found that the other sources of international news in the newspapers include PTI (Press Trust of India) which is India's largest news agency. Apart from PTI, some stories were attributed to the AFP, another major transnational news service. It has been mentioned in the literature review as well. Also, the story "The Addict is Dead" published in the Hindustan Times on 25.07.2011 was accredited to the Guardian, one of UK's top newspaper. However, the findings of this project illustrate that the Indian English dailies' dependence on Reuters and AP as source for international news is greater.

In some news reports, the near-total dependence of the newspapers on the story provided by transnational news agencies was especially striking because of the significance and direct relevance of

the happenings reported for the country or Indians abroad. One such story was the news of U.S. Foreign Secretary Hillary Clinton’s visit to India, a story that pertains directly to the country, but, the Times of India and Hindustan Times had given the information drawn from AFP and Reuters respectively publishing their news copy unchanged (The Times of India had published the AFP story and the comparison between the Hindustan Times story and the Reuters copy returned a result of 96%) Another story that appeared in the Hindustan Times of an Indian man refused entry in an Australian pub for wearing a turban the newspaper provided the AFP news report. The importance of this story is further elevated in the light of the recent racial attacks in the country against Indians. However, the paper didn’t probe any further than the information provided by the AFP wire.

The results of the content analysis performed on the data affirms the hypothesis that The Indian English newspapers have an over dependence on international news agencies for stories from around the world. **Out of the data sample of 90 world news pieces selected from the three dailies 70% (63 of 90) stories came from either Reuters or A.P.** Apart from the sheer volume of new stories imported from the transnational news services by the top newspapers, **the analysis also brought forth the fact, that these agency dispatches are most of the times published without hardly any rework or editing by the publications.** The percentage of agency content detected in the news stories was in the range of 80-90%. This indicates that the wire services’ stories had been published almost unchanged. The extent of these Indian English newspapers’ dependence on Reuters and AP in terms of the percentage of stories in which agency content was detected is tabulated as follows

NEWSPAPER	PERCENTAGE OF STORIES IN WHICH REUTERS OR A.P CONTENT WAS DETECTED
TIMES OF INDIA	76
HINDUSTAN TIMES	70
HINDU	60

Coming to these papers’ coverage of Asia, the results of the content analysis illustrate that a large amount of stories were imported from Reuters and A.P. In the Times of India and Hindustan Times a total of 70% and 60% of the news reports respectively had published the stories of Reuters and A.P. with barely any changes. For Hindu, the figure was 40% which indicates that the paper does draw information from other sources and not just rely on the wire services. However, in the case of the two most widely

read newspapers, it is dichotomous that on many occasions their readers learn of happenings in nearby countries through the conduit of a news organization headquartered thousands of miles away. The possible negative fallouts implications of this are dwelled upon in the following sections

The Hindu, as shown by the results, depends comparatively lesser on the global news agencies than the Times of India and Hindustan Times. To investigate the possible reasons for this variation in priority given by the dailies to international coverage further analysis and study was required. It would be a rational assumption that the newspaper whose foreign coverage is least reliant on the international news agencies would carry comparatively greater number of foreign stories. So, it was hypothesized that the Hindu would have a higher number of international new stories than the Times of India and Hindustan Times. And to prove this the number of new stories published in the respective World Section of these three dailies were counted. The time frame selected was a composite week in the month of July. The composite week comprised of the following days and dates, the first Monday and Tuesday (04.07.2011 and 05.07.2011), the second Wednesday and Thursday (13.07.2011 and 14.07.2011), the fourth Friday and Saturday (and the last Sunday (31.07.2011)). The number of stories appearing in the World Section of each of the three newspapers was counted and the results are as follows:

DATE	TIMES OF INDIA	HINDUSTAN TIMES	HINDU
04.07.2011	8	7	5
05.07.2011	8	6	6
13.07.2011	9	5	9
14.07.2011	8	6	9
22.07.2011	9	6	5
23.07.2011	8	6	5
31.07.2011	9	5	5

After finding the number of stories published in the World Section of the three English dailies and collating the results, it is clear that the researcher's hypothesis of The Hindu carrying the maximum number of international new stories has been disproved. In fact, there is not a significant difference in the number of the world news reports published by the newspapers. The Times of India was found to provide comparatively more stories from the globe followed by Hindustan Times. **It can be gauged from**

**this that these two dailies focus on providing a large volume of foreign news coverage rather than an original reportage of global events.**

Since the count of the international news stories of the three newspapers didn't provide a possible explanation to the Hindu's lesser dependence on wire services compared to the Times of India and Hindustan Times, the readership profiles i.e. the demographics of the people who read these papers the most were examined. The data was gathered from the Indian Readership Survey, 2011, Times International Media Marketing (which is the marketing arm of the Times Group that owns the Times of India) It has been compartmentalized into three categories age-group, social grade (refers to the social class that most widely reads the particular paper and is expressed as SEC (Section) A1, upper and upper middle class then SEC A2 etc.), description. And the data is presented as follows:

NEWSPAPER	AGE-GROUP	SOCIAL GRADE	DESCRIPTION
Times of India	20+yrs	SEC A1- SEC A2	Young ,affluent segment; students and professionals
Hindustan Times	25+yrs	SEC A1-SEC A2	Young affluent professionals
Hindu	25+yrs	SEC A1-SECA2-SECB	Government officials and business leaders

The assessment of the demographic profile of the people who read the three top Indian English newspapers the most offers a possible explanation to the variation in the priorities accorded by the dailies to an original and independent international news reportage. The aforementioned data shows that Hindu is most widely read by government officials, bureaucrats including those in the foreign services of the country. It also has a reputation in the country for serious journalism and is regarded to provide comprehensive coverage of events. Therefore, this offers a possible explanation for the comparatively lesser reliance of the paper on agency copy and greater inclination towards original independent coverage of foreign events.

After delineating the demographic profile of the people who read the Times of India and the Hindustan Times the most it was found that the majority of their readers comprise of the young affluent section of the population that the advertisers are particularly interested in. Apart from the daily Page 3 supplements these papers also provide weekend supplements devoted to luxury and lifestyle accompanied by various advertisements. These two also include many celebrity news stories ( It was observed in the International Section of the Hindustan Times that a sub-section was devoted exclusively



to international celebrity news) There has been a trivialization of content in the commercially successful mainline broadsheets , especially the English newspapers (Mathur,257; Datta,2005: 89). It is probable that these are the reasons why a for large percentage of their foreign news stories they had simply published the verbatim agency dispatches word for word offering no unique or independent coverage.

Coming back to the results of the content analysis, the big picture in the case of this study is the media imperialism debate. Thus (2010) writes that the information flow continues to be predominantly from the advanced Western nations (where these transnational news agencies are based) to the rest of the world. The findings of the analysis support this as 70% of the news pieces were found to be almost clones of the associated Reuters or A.P. story. On the other hand, the number of news stories which were not found to contain agency material and were bylined to the newspaper's correspondents was marginal. Corroborating this with the media imperialism theory it can be stated that India continues to be at the receiving end of the global news flow and despite significant improvements in its media system is still a "periphery" nation.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the content analysis have established that 70% of the foreign news coverage in the top Indian English newspapers comes not from their own reporters and correspondents but from international news agencies: Reuters and A.P. This section builds on the arguments put forward in the literature review and the findings of the content analysis and further explores the possible ramifications of this dependence on a very limited number of global agencies for news copy.

### **The Changing Concept Of News And The Transfer Of News Values And Principles**

Articulating on Latin American media's growing reliance on imported news, Reyes Matta (1979:164) stated that the role of journalism in the region was originally to stimulate and present discussions and debates involving the political process. However, with the influx of the international news agencies and the influence of the North American journalism model, the concept of news reoriented itself from its task of interpreting events and bringing forth views to the selection of news in accordance with certain factors called news values (further discussed below) and the citation of facts (Ibid). This implies that a disproportionately large inflow of news selected and covered by organizations of different institutional priorities and production practices can eclipse the notion of journalism originally prevalent in a particular media system.

Indian journalism like the Latin American was essentially more interpretive and laid an emphasis on the explanation and analysis of happenings. To gain a deeper understanding of the Indian concept of news, it is important to refer to the Gandhian journalism, as he is till date regarded to be a stalwart journalism and the fine journalistic caliber he demonstrated through his writings during and after the Independence movement is an example worth emulating. The weekly newspaper Gandhi started "Harijan" in 1938 is a quintessential example of the journalism he practiced. Through Harijan, he disseminated his views on the importance of education, rural reconstruction and deplored the social malaise of untouchability. In fact, he described it as a "views-paper" rather than a newspaper (Gandhi cited in Fischer, 2002: 246). This elucidates the importance of meaningful opinions in his philosophy of journalism. However, it should not be construed that this concept of journalism undermined facts. In fact, it emphasized that the Press and other media institutions must be committed to scrupulously bring forth the facts. However, they should go beyond as well penetrating deeper into the various political and socio-economic issues that required resolution (because at that time the newly independent

country was confronted with many challenges) and bringing forth the well-informed views and voices of the people.

Conveying his views on the role of journalism in society Gandhi in his autobiography stated that “The sole aim of journalism should be service” (Gandhi, 1958:211). Gandhi’s idea of journalism was wedded to communitarianism and humanitarianism (Velanilam: 80). However, the ethically underpinned journalism of the Gandhian era that strived to galvanize the process of social change has been replaced by a journalistic practice that conforms to the pocket book (Ibid: 89) This suggests that the Indian journalism is increasingly gives a recital of facts in accordance with the globally(read Western) accepted norms of journalism and refrains from delving deeper into contentious issues affecting the country.

As mentioned in the literature review news agencies like the Reuters and A.P. are Western institutions. Even the principles of objectivity and neutrality that these organizations claim to be a stickler of are inherently the canons of journalism adopted by Western newsgathering organizations. Their journalistic writing style lays greater emphasis on brevity rather than detailed analysis. Manning (2001:57) writes that for these news agencies the rapidity with which they can distribute the news comes higher in the list of priorities than contextual information. They present even a complex issue with unambiguous angles; an approach which sometimes might not be suitable for the understanding of occurrences in the developing world (further discussed below). This pocket-book concept of journalistic practice is dissimilar to the original Indian notion of journalism- one that delves deeper into events and issues whether domestic or international giving an incisive analysis.

The Anglo-Saxon journalism model has an event and individual oriented approach to foreign news selection, which McQuail (2005:310) argues stems from Western cultural values. This is particularly problematic in the developing world that includes India because the societies of these countries are in a phase of transition. Protests, clashes etc are depicted as events that occur sporadically, the underlying tensions that lead to them are not discussed and analyzed and the focus is on the acts of violence. And by replicating their coverage the retail media (the Indian English newspapers in this study) don’t provide the people with the requisite contextualization and background information that would allow them to thoroughly grasp the processes of social change and development underway in the region.

News values can be likened to a check list that enumerates certain yardsticks which allow the journalist to judge the newsworthiness of an event. Galtung and Ruge’s(1965) seminal study on news values documented that the Western media accorded significantly greater priority to elite nations in foreign

coverage. The tilt in the favor of Western developed countries was also reasserted by Harcup and O'Neill's (2001) study on U.K. newspapers .Wu(2003) also showed that the countries with political/economic clout receive greater attention in the global press. By relying on global wire services for international news it is highly likely that Indian English print media also unconsciously imbibe the Western news values(institutionalized in the transnational news agencies) including the elite-centeredness in foreign reporting. By doing so they might allow their foreign coverage to be dominated by the developed Western countries and underreport the affairs of developing nations that include India itself and several of its neighbors like Sri Lanka, Pakistan etc.

The difference between the coverage of developing and developed countries is not only quantitative. Rosenblum (1981) argues that the language of international reporting by Western newsgathering institutions (like Reuters and A.P.) evokes an image of the Third World characterized by coups, political turmoil, economic instability earthquakes and other natural disasters and this create systematic distortions. In other words, it takes a volcanic eruption for Indonesia to make news. And by publishing such stories of the developing world (includes India and other Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan) written by transnational news agencies, the Indian newspapers are perpetuating the perception in the minds of the people that they live in a dangerously volatile region.

The findings of the study iterate that and thereby the international news consumed by the readers of the leading Indian English dailies varies minimally as it is drawn from a very limited number of sources. The application of the same news values and principles as that of the global wire services is one of the factors that lead to a homogeneity in the content that is presented to the public (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) and the discussion now turns to the consequent lack of content diversity in news media.

### **Lack Of Information Diversity**

The Indian media sector is booming driven by rising literacy levels and technological refinements with new newspaper titles and news channels being launched regularly. India has emerged as the largest market for newspapers in the world with 110 million copies being consumed everyday (WAN-IFRA, 2010). The industry recorded a growth rate of 11% in 2010 - one of the highest in the world according to 2011 FICCI -KPMG report the media and entertainment sector(FICCI is India's topmost association of business organizations). All these are positive signs that indicate the Indian media has grown in scale, reach and influence. This creates the impression that the increase in the number of media platforms has

been accompanied by a significant improvement in the coverage of happenings including the international news. However, if there is large extent of source concentration i.e. only a very limited number of transnational whole sale news providers do on-the-field reporting and the other recycle their news with minor changes (as was established by the content analysis in the case of the most widely read Indian English newspapers with 70% of the news coming from two news organizations) it puts into doubt the usefulness of this plethora of media outlets.

For a democratic nation like India, the harm caused by a paucity of diverse viewpoints is of greater magnitude than in totalitarian societies. This is because citizen involvement is pivotal to democracies. And for citizens to make well-informed decisions regarding their welfare and governance, it is imperative that they have access to a range of ideas. Habermas (1996) articulates that one of the key roles of a free press in a participatory democracy is to “preserve an openness for competing opinions and a representative diversity of voices” (Ibid: 368). The media must bring forward a pluralism of opinions on the plane of discussion and deliberation. This would acquaint the people with the multidimensionality of events and social realities and allow them to understand their complexities. This would enrich the public discourse on world events of consequence in the country.

### **The Agenda Setting Role Of The News Agencies**

A possible underlying implication the Indian English newspapers’ reliance on imported news could be emergence of these news agencies as the de-facto agenda-setters for Indian English print media. However, providing a large volume of stories to these newspapers and other media outlets is not the only agenda-setting function exercised by these transnational news agencies. They also influence the “independent” coverage of the media outlets that subscribe to their news services. Tuchman (1978:20) writes that the editors of client media dispatch their own correspondents to cover events after receiving information of their occurrence from wire service reports. And by doing so, the client media parrot their judgment of which events to cover and which to ignore. They might even risk the possibility of missing a relevant story because it was not covered by the wire services.

Boyd-Barett (1980:19) argues that these transnational news agencies even influence the judgment made by client media about the prominence given to a news piece. This suggests that the Indian English newspapers might devote less coverage to a foreign story that pertains to one of the neighboring countries and is of relevance to India but doesn’t figure high on the news agenda of the global news agencies. For example, Times of India devoted 300 words to a piece titled “Harry Potter wields big wand

at the box office”that was drawn from Reuters (the verbatim usage of the Reuters story was 84%) whereas the news story HinaRabbaniKhar becomes the new Pak FM that appeared on the same day had a word count of 260. Similarly, in Hindustan Times the story “The Addict Is Dead”, on Amy Winehouse’s death that appeared on 25th July was 525 words long, but the story Nepal Police Arrest Man OverLinksTo Mumbai Blasts was devoted 332 words. It is clear in the set of stories above which are of greater significance to the country. However, the disparities in the coverage arose because of the colossal attention given by the international news agencies and other global media to the news of the Harry Potter movie and Amy Winehouse’s death. Although these examples are too few in number to draw a broad inference about the Indian English journalism, but corroborating them with the result of the content analysis they suggest that a concomitant of drawing a large number of foreign news stories from the international news services is that the Indian English dailies replicate their news agenda to a certain degree as well. This agenda may or may not be reflective of the nation’s priorities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study indicate that to a large extent the foreign news consumed by the readers of the leading Indian English dailies namely the Times of India, Hindustan Times and the Hindu comes from a highly limited number of news services like Reuters and A.P. Although the level of dependence on the wire services varies (the Times of India and Hindustan Times having a near total dependence on them; the Hindu's reliance is comparatively lesser). As mentioned at the outset of this project that media professionals would use the agency copy for the simple reason that they pay to subscribe to the services of these news agencies. Also, these news agencies have a long tradition of accurate reporting it is the over-reliance on them for the coverage of international events, even those that occur in the same region and the resulting limitations on citizen discourse through lack of information diversity etc. that this dissertation seeks to draw attention towards.

The findings of this research should be viewed in the broader context of the media imperialism debate. Analyzing the definition put forward by Boyd-Barett (1980) and also bringing into perspective related theoretical constructs given by Galtung(1971), Mattelart(1979) media imperialism can be understood as the power relations between media apparatuses whereby those that belongs to the nations with greater political and economic clout dominate and the others are simply at the receiving end of the media and cultural products of the former. The results of this thesis indicate that the Indian English dailies are highly reliant on international news agencies like Reuters and A.P. for foreign news. And it is hypothesized that this dependency manifests itself on various levels apart from the sheer volume of the imported news stories like in terms of news content the Indian dailies might orient their focus towards those foreign events that have been identified by the global news agencies as Tuchman (1978) argues. It is also likely that the priorities ascribed by the newspapers to world news items would be similar to those accorded by the international wholesale news providers. This may also lead to a displacement of the Indian concept of news and journalism. Also, by regurgitating the transnational news agencies' reportage of foreign events that at times negatively stereotype the developing world (Rosenblum, 1981) which includes India, they risk the possibility of distorting the worldview of their readers. Therefore, the over-dependence on transnational agencies is a multidimensional issue and needs to be addressed as one.

The proposals made in the MacBride Report for various reasons could not yield concrete results. The NWICO debate also gradually waned. However, some of the key issues of their argument regarding information imbalances between the center (countries with advanced media systems like the U.S.A and

U.K. which are also where the two major news agencies Reuters and A.P. are based) and periphery (the developing nations) still remain pertinent as the findings of this study illustrate taking the Indian English papers' international news coverage as a case in point. Therefore, it is clear that the issue of this "information dependency syndrome" of the developing nations on the developed countries requires a more nuanced understanding and a sophisticated appraisal in the present times.

Further news agency studies should orient their focus to exploring why the news organizations choose to rely on the agency dispatches. Is it always because of the limited availability of resources or there are certain other underlying reasons as well like an inertia in news workers that disinclines them from on-the-field reporting and drawing information from a multitude of sources or is it because of a colossal increase in work pressure (as Davies (2008) argues in the context of British media) or a cumulative effect of these and other unexplored factors that are shaping the contemporary mediascape.

The over dependence of the top Indian English newspapers on the international news agencies for foreign news is especially striking for two reasons: the remarkable growth of the Indian media in the last decade and the diversity of the country's society that necessitates a multi-perspective journalism. While in most of the developed parts of the world, newspaper circulations are dipping, the Indian print media is growing and is expected to maintain the double-digit growth rate for the next five years (FICCI-KPMG,2011). The report also mentioned that the advertising revenues of the print sectors are expected to touch 183 billion rupees a nearly double increase of from 100 billion rupees in 2007. The booming print media in India should invest in newsgathering resource, do extensive international reporting and provide their readers with high quality original reports from around the world and not just transcribe agency dispatches word for word. Also, the transnational agencies' notion of news that focuses on uniformity contradicts with the idea of journalism that suits India, a country of a highly diverse social milieu. The journalism of the world's largest democracy should make sense of international developments to the citizens from a perspective that conveys "the many vicissitudes that mark the idea of India" (Sonwalker, 2009: 380): the Indian perspective.



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