Introduction

The world is on the threshold of a new industrial revolution. A revolution which promises to be at least as significant as that which has brought most of the growth of the world’s economy in the past two centuries. A revolution which promises to have just as far reaching an impact on a wide variety of aspects of life, and a revolution with global reach. Telecommunications are at the epicentre of this revolution.

(ITU, 1999a: 5)

As the new millennium dawned, global television tracked the rise of the sun across the world, with images broadcast live via 300 satellite channels to audiences in each of the world’s 24 time zones. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, millions of people can communicate with each other in real time, across national boundaries and time zones, through voice, text and pictures, and, increasingly, a combination of all three. In a digitally linked globe, the flow of data across borders has grown exponentially, boosting international commerce, more and more of which is being conducted through new technologies.

Defined as ‘communication that occurs across international borders’ (Fortner, 1993: 6) the analysis of international communication has been traditionally concerned with government-to-government information exchanges, in which a few powerful states dictated the communication agenda (Fischer and Merrill, 1976; Frederick, 1992; Fortner, 1993; Hamelink, 1994; Mattelart, 1994; Mowlana, 1996, 1997). Advances in communication and information technologies in the late twentieth century have greatly enhanced the scope of international communication – going beyond government-to-government and including business-to-business and people-to-people interactions at a global level and at speeds unimaginable even a decade ago.

Apart from nation-states, many non-state international actors are increasingly shaping international communication. The growing global importance of international non-governmental bodies – Public Interest Organizations (PINGOs), such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace and the International Olympic Committee; Business Interest Organizations (BINGOs), such as GE, News Corporation and AT&T, and
Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), such as the European Union, NATO, ASEAN – is indicative of this trend (Hamelink, 1994).

In the contemporary world, international communication ‘encompasses political, economic, social, cultural and military concerns’ (Fortner, 1993: 1), and, as it becomes more widespread and multi-layered, the need to study it has acquired an added urgency. Intellectual and research interest in international aspects of communication, culture and media has grown as a result of the globalization of media and cultural industries. Communication studies itself has broadened to include cultural and media studies, and is increasingly being taught in a comparative and international framework. However, international communication is not yet considered a separate academic discipline, since its concerns overlap with other subject areas (Stevenson, 1992). In some institutions, mainly in universities in the United States, it has been taught within international relations or political science departments, while in Europe and the rest of the world, international communication has yet to find a firm mooring, the proliferation of new courses in global, intercultural and international communication notwithstanding.

The US-based Iranian scholar Hamid Mowlana identifies four key interrelated approaches to international communication: idealistic-humanistic, proselytization, economic and the political (Mowlana, 1997: 6–7). Examples of the first would be the work of British communication scholar Colin Cherry, who has argued that communication can promote global harmony (Cherry, 1978). The economic and strategic implications of international communication have been explored by Armand Mattelart (Mattelart, 1994), while Cees Hamelink has examined politics of world communication (Hamelink, 1994).

The emphasis of this book is on the economic and political dimensions of international communication and their relationship with technological and cultural processes. It aims to provide a critical overview of the profound changes in international media and communication at the threshold of the new millennium, at a time when the political, economic and technological contexts in which media and communication operate are becoming increasingly global. Intercultural communication, which examines the interpersonal contact of peoples of different cultural backgrounds, is outside the remit of this volume, which also does not aim to cover other more personal forms of international communication, such as travel and tourism, educational and cultural exchanges.

From the beginnings of human society, communication has taken place over distance and time – from cave paintings in Australia to the mobile Internet – through contact between different cultures via travel and trade, as well as war and colonialism. Such interactions have resulted in the transporting and implanting of ideas, religious beliefs, languages and economic and political systems, from one part of the world to another, by a variety of means that have evolved over millennia – from the oral, to being mediated by written language, sound or image (Schramm, 1988). The word ‘communicate’ has its
roots in the Latin word *communicare*, 'to share'. International communication, then, is about sharing knowledge, ideas and beliefs among the various peoples of the world, and therefore it can be a contributing factor in resolving global conflict and promoting mutual understanding among nations. However, more often channels of international communication have been used not for such lofty ideals but to promote the economic and political interests of the world’s powerful nations, who control the means of global communication.

The expansion of international communication should be seen within the overall context of the growth of capitalism in the nineteenth century. The availability of fast and reliable information was crucial for the expansion of European capital, and, 'in a global system, physical markets have to be replaced by notional markets in which prices and values are assessed through the distribution of regular, reliable information'. Thus the information network 'was both the cause and the result of capitalism' (Smith, 1980: 74). If Britain dominated international communication during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century – primarily through its control of the world’s telegraph and cable networks – the United States emerged as an information superpower after the Second World War. In 1944, the US business magazine *Fortune* published an article on ‘World Communications’, which warned that the future growth of the USA depended on the efficiency of US-owned communications systems, just as Britain’s had done in the past: ‘Great Britain provides an unparalleled example of what a communications system meant to a great nation standing athwart the globe’ (cited in Chanan, 1985: 121).

One key use of international communication has been for public diplomacy, with the aim of influencing the policies of other nations by appeals to its citizens through means of public communication (Fortner, 1993). During the Cold War years, the propaganda of ideological confrontation dominated the use of international communication channels. Ignoring the complexity of media systems, this bipolar view of the world opposed the ‘free’ US system at the desirable end of a continuum and totalitarian systems at the other, an approach which was ‘a strong ideological weapon in the spread of American media enterprises overseas’ (Wells, 1996: 2).

With the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the retreat of socialism, as well as the marginalization of the global South in international decision-making processes, the West, led by the USA, emerged as the key agenda-setter in the arena of international communication, as in other forms of global interactions. In the post-Cold War world, so much had changed that, by 2000, a US-led consortium was planning to lease the ailing Russian space station *Mir* as an international space destination and even as a set for Hollywood films (Whittell, 2000).

The move towards the worldwide privatization of former state-run broadcasting and telecommunication networks, championed by such international organizations as the World Trade Organization and the World
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Bank, has transformed the landscape of international communication. As UNESCO's *World Communication Report* observes:

> The world of communications is gradually changing from an economy of scarcity and government-structured controls to a free economy oriented towards abundant supply and diversity. This change quickens the pace of the elimination of monopolies in the delivery and distribution of information, in both telecommunications and the audiovisual field.

*(UNESCO, 1997: 11)*

In a market-driven media and communication environment, the public-service role of the mass media has been undermined. Although some national broadcasters continue to receive high audience shares – varying from India's Doordarshan's 80 per cent and the BBC's nearly 35 per cent – in more commercialized television environments such as Brazil, Rede Brasil, the only public-service channel, had an audience of just 4 per cent (UNESCO, 1997). As mass media, especially television, gain more leverage over setting the international agenda (Shaw, 1996), concerns about the growing concentration of media power and its impact on international communication are also increasing.

Although the Internet has received greater attention in recent public debates on international communication, television, being much more widely accessible, is perhaps more influential in setting the global communication agenda. In an era of multi-channel digital broadcasting, the quantity of mainly Western images has multiplied manyfold and with that their power to promote 'virtual wars' or a consumerist way of life. Television images can transcend linguistic barriers and affect national media cultures in a way that other text- or voice-based media cannot. According to the 1999–2000 *Satellite Industry Guide*, co-published by the Satellite Industry Association, direct-to-home television was one of the fastest growing segments, accounting for $20 billion and growing at 30 per cent annually *(Satnews, 1999c)*.

Though other major economic blocs, such as the European Union and Japan, and some developing countries, notably India, Brazil and China, have gained from opening up the field of global communication, the biggest beneficiary of a liberalized international communication system is the United States, the world's information superpower with the most extensive network of communications satellites, the largest exporter of cultural products and a global leader in electronic commerce.

The USA, and the transnational corporations based there, have a major stake in creating and maintaining an international communication system that favours the free market. It can employ its public diplomacy through extensive control of the world's communication hard and software to promote a vision of a 'borderless' world (for capital but not people). As one commentator put it, the USA dominates
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(the) global traffic in information and ideas. American music, American movies, American television, and American software are so dominant, so sought after, and so visible that they are now available literally everywhere on the Earth. They influence the tastes, lives, and aspirations of virtually every nation.

(Rothkopf, 1997: 43).

The 'emerging infosphere - and its potential as a giant organic culture processor, democratic empowerer, universal connector, and ultimate communicator,' is seen as crucial for US public diplomacy (ibid.: 52).

In the post-Soviet world, there appears to be a consensus emerging among US policy-makers that in order to retain US hegemony the preferred option is the deployment of its 'soft power' – its domination of global communication and mediated culture – rather than the force employed by the European empires during the colonial era (Nye, 1990). As Joseph Nye, a former US Assistant Secretary of Defense and William Owens, a former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff argue: ‘Information is the new coin of the international realm, and the United States is better positioned than any other country to multiply the potency of its hard and soft power resources through information’ (Nye and Owens, 1996: 20).

Promotion of democracy and human rights and a 'free flow of capital' worldwide are the proclaimed aims of US public diplomacy. US foreign policy 'must project an imperial dimension,' counsels a commentator:

The US role should resemble that of nineteenth-century Great Britain, the global leader of that era. US influence would reflect the appeal of American culture, the strength of the American economy, and the attractiveness of the norms being promoted. Coercion and the use of force would normally be a secondary option.

(Haass, 1999: 41)

However, this rhetoric of democracy, prosperity and human rights sits awkwardly with the unmistakable trend towards corporatization and concentration of global information and communication networks among a few, mainly Western, megacorporations, making them what US media critic Ben Bagdikian has called a 'private ministry of information' (Bagdikian, 1997). Cross-border mergers in the media and telecommunication industries – most notably the merger of America On-line with Time Warner, and the $190 billion British Vodafone takeover of German mobile telephone company Mannesmann – in the first few months of the new millennium – have further concentrated media and telecommunication power among a few conglomerates.

Extolling the virtues of such mergers for consumers, Time magazine wrote that the AOL-Time Warner deal had the potential for consumers to offer 'whatever they want – books, movies, magazines, music – wherever they want it, whatever way they choose, whether on a TV, a PC, a cell phone...
or any of the myriad wireless devices that are hurtling toward the marketplace' (Okrent, 2000: 47). However, concerns have also been raised about the adverse effects of such corporatization of international information and entertainment networks on the diversity and plurality of global media cultures, by undermining cultural sovereignty and accentuating the already deep divisions in terms of information resources between and among nations. Crucially, it could also increase the economic and technological dependence of the information-poor South on the information-rich North.

An analysis of the evolution of international communication reveals a dominance and dependency syndrome – the dominance of a few countries by virtue of their control of both the software and hardware of global communication and the dependence of many nations upon them. To understand contemporary international communication one must look at the historical continuities which have given a headstart to some countries and created information poverty among many others. From nineteenth-century imperialism to the 'electronic empires' of the twenty-first century, the big powers have dominated global political, military and economic systems as well as information and communication networks. Though technologies employed for transmission of messages across national borders have changed – from telegraph, telephone, radio, television, to the mobile Internet – the main actors in international communication have remained the same, despite the emergence of some regional players representing different ‘geo-linguistic’ groups. The dynamic between continuity and change is then the central theme of this volume.

A recurring issue in the book is the political and economic implications of such supremacy for Southern countries dependent on information and communication channels which remain largely within the control of a few countries and the corporations based there. Admittedly, the South is far from being a homogeneous entity, with varying degrees of media and communication resources, yet the developing countries share a fundamental disadvantage in their inability to influence the global communication agenda, which continues to be set and implemented by the world’s most powerful nations.

The book is divided into seven chapters, with a series of case studies to exemplify the main concepts and arguments. Chapter 1 provides a historical context for the study of international communication, examining how communication had an international dimension for centuries before the modern colonial empires emerged. Its role in the expansion of European capitalism across the world is illustrated by a case study of the rise of the British news agency Reuters, whose fortunes paralleled the growth of the British Empire. In the second section, the chapter examines how mass media, especially radio, was used by both blocs during the ideological confrontation of the Cold War. Covert international communication is analysed by focusing on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, two prime examples of US secret propaganda during the years of East-West ideological battles regularly fought over the airwaves. The third section of the chapter examines the
relationship between international communication and development, with a critique of Southern demands for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which dominated the debate during the 1970s and 1980s and was also affected by the bipolar view of international relations. The case study of India’s Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) programme assesses a pioneering attempt to use television for education and development.

Following on from the historical context, Chapter 2 aims to provide a theoretical overview of competing theories that inform the study of international communication, from Marxist to culturalist and postmodernist analyses of the subject. The chapter introduces a range of theoretical perspectives on international communication over the past century, setting out the arguments of the main theorists and their approaches to its study. The perspectives discussed range from traditional Marxist analysis to dependency theory and neo-Marxism, modernization theory and its critics, theories of globalization and of the information society, as well as cultural studies approaches.

Chapter 3 maps out the expansion of transnational media and telecommunications corporations in the post-Cold War era of free-market capitalism. These are analysed within the macro-economic context of liberalization, deregulation and privatization and the policies of multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The chapter examines the ideological policy shifts in international institutions – from a state-regulated to a market-led environment – along with the convergence of the telecommunications, computers and media industries, lying behind the transnationalization and global expansion of mainly Western media and communication corporations.

It then explores the unprecedented growth of the global satellite industry – which provides the hardware for international communication – as a result of the liberalization of the international agreements on satellite broadcasting and telecommunication, focusing on the changing nature of the international satellite consortium, Intelsat, which is in the process of transforming itself from an intergovernmental to a private corporation. In the third section, the chapter discusses why transnational corporations have benefited most from the liberalization and privatization of international communication, taking Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, the most global of media companies, as a case study.

In Chapter 4 the focus is on the global media market, which has evolved partly as a result of the deregulation and liberalization of the international communication sector in the 1990s, and partly as consequence of the rapid expansion of new communication technologies, notably satellite and cable. It surveys the key players in the global media and cultural industries: advertising, film, music, publishing, television and newsgencies. The chapter includes up-to-date information about the world’s most powerful media and
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communication companies and discusses their strategies in a range of media sectors, demonstrating corporate synergies and the links between production, distribution and marketing of their products in a global marketplace. The chapter addresses questions about the implications of the concentration of ownership of the world’s media and cultural industries among a few vertically integrated, global conglomerates. Two case studies – Disney’s Entertainment and Sports Network (ESPN), and Cable News Network (CNN), part of AOL-Time Warner, the world’s biggest media and entertainment company – contextualize the discussion about the globalization of media markets.

Having established the general pattern of ownership which shows the overwhelming US dominance of the international flow of information and entertainment, Chapter 5 examines the effects of the largely one-way flow of international communication in different socio-cultural contexts, looking particularly at exports of US films and television across the world. The predominance of US media products, especially Hollywood films, is discussed in relation to the European Union and its concerns about threat to its cultural sovereignty. The chapter then examines questions of homogenization and resistance to the English language programmes which promote a Western consumerist lifestyle. It explores how mass media interact with and influence consciousness and media cultures and cultural identities and discusses these within the framework of the debates on media and cultural imperialism.

The internationalization of the mainly US-based children’s TV channels and Music Television (MTV) are discussed as two examples of how consumerist culture is being promoted through the powerful medium of television. In the final section the chapter examines the process of cultural adaptation, arguing that the homogenization of global cultural products has been counterbalanced by heterogeneous tendencies leading to a hybrid form of global–local interaction. The issue of hybridity – how global genres are adapted to suit national cultural codes – is analysed through the case study of Zee TV, India’s biggest private multimedia network.

The focus of Chapter 6 is on contra-flow in international media products. Through a series of case studies, the chapter investigates the role of regional actors and the growing reverse flow in media products, which demonstrates how the transnationalization of media organizations has profoundly altered the market in global communications. Such regional players as the pan-Arabic channel Middle East Broadcasting Centre and China’s Phoenix television channel, based in Hong Kong, are discussed as powerful regional actors with well-defined geo-linguistic media and cultural constituencies. The chapter also examines the trend towards the movement of cultural products from global South to the media-rich North. Brazil’s TV Globo, one of the world’s biggest exporters of television programmes, and India’s film industry, the world’s largest producer of feature films, are analysed as two prime examples to underline the complexity of international cultural transactions.
The final chapter identifies and analyses some of the key issues in an age of computer-mediated international communication. It examines the impact on contemporary media culture of changes in technology, especially the unprecedented growth of the Internet. Microsoft Corporation, the world's biggest computer software maker, is discussed as a case study of the forces that are leading the new information revolution and also acting as tax inspectors on the new global knowledge industry. The chapter also explores how information and communication technologies such as satellites can be used for both entertainment and surveillance.

The liberating and empowering potential of new information and communication technologies is contrasted with the crucial issue of access to them. Examples of alternative communications in an international context are discussed to contextualize the potential of new technologies such as the Internet to empower citizens, while maintaining the refrain that a vast majority of the world's population is excluded from the global information revolution and not benefiting from electronic commerce. It also argues for the need to broaden the analysis of international communication, incorporating a variety of approaches, to provide a framework within which this increasingly complex subject can be analysed.

The book includes maps, diagrams and charts to provide the reader with easily digestible statistical information and references and to combine a clear exposition of both the empirical and the theoretical terrain, with examples from a wide range of international media, including television, film, advertising, news media and publishing. A glossary and a detailed chronology, as well as a comprehensive bibliography are also appended to make the volume useful for students and researchers alike. Given its international scope and multiperspectival approach, it is hoped that this book will act as a guide to understanding institutions, technologies, production and consumption of global media and communication.

In writing a book of this nature, one accumulates many intellectual and other debts. First and foremost, I am indebted to all the scholars in the field of international communication and other professionals, especially those from trade and business publications, from whose work this volume has benefited enormously. I also want to record my gratitude to the geniuses behind the World Wide Web, giving researchers access to a first-rate international library in one's own home, and on which I have drawn extensively for the book.

Colleagues at Coventry University, where I worked for most of the period this book was in gestation, deserve heartfelt thanks, not least for covering for me while I was on study leave during the autumn of 1999. I also drew sustenance from the generosity of new colleagues at University of North London, whose good-naturedness and understanding were very important in the crucial final weeks of finishing the manuscript. I have been fortunate to work with Lesley Riddle of Arnold, benefiting from her kind support and professionalism and with Susan Dunsmore, to whose eagle eye for detail in the editing process I am very grateful.
Finally, a special thanks to my wife Elizabeth who was involved in the project from its very inception. I have no hesitation in admitting that any weaknesses of the book are mine, but its strengths reflect her excellent editorial input. Our children – Shivani, 8 and Rohan, 5 – displayed exemplary behaviour and extraordinary patience during the writing of the book, sometimes under trying conditions. As a reward, they have been promised a trip to Disneyland. Having been glued to my computer in a tiny study for the best part of a year, scrolling through hundreds of websites and poring over thousands of pages of reports, books, journals, newspapers and magazines, even I could do with some Disney magic.
The study of contemporary international communication can be illuminated by an understanding of the elements of continuity and change in its development. The nexus of economic, military and political power has always depended on efficient systems of communication, from flags, beacon fires and runners, to ships and telegraph wires, and now satellites. The evolution of telegraphic communication and empire in the nineteenth century exemplifies these interrelationships, which continued throughout the twentieth century, even after the end of empire. During the two World Wars and the Cold War, the power and significance of the new media – radio and then television – for international communication were demonstrated by their use for international propaganda as well as recognizing their potential for socio-economic development.

Communication and empire

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

The Greek historian, Diodorus Cronus (4th century BC) recounts how the Persian king, Darius I (522–486 BC), who extended the Persian Empire from the Danube to the Indus, could send news from the capital to the provinces by means of a line of shouting men positioned on heights. This kind of transmission was 30 times faster than using runners. In De Bello Gallico,
Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) reports that the Gauls, using the human voice, could call all their warriors to war in just three days. Using fire at night and smoke or mirrors during the day is mentioned in ancient texts, from the Old Testament to Homer.

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

The Indian Emperor Ashoka’s edicts, inscribed on rock in the third century BC, are found across South Asia, from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka and writers had a prominent place in the royal household. During the Mughal period in Indian history, the waqi’a-nawis (newswriters) were employed by the kings to appraise them of the progress in the empire. Both horsemens and despatch runners transmitted news and reports. In China, the T’ang Dynasty (618–907) created a formal hand-written publication, the ti pao or ‘official newspaper’ which disseminated information to the elite and in the Ching Period (1644–1911) private news bureaux sprang up which composed and circulated official news in the printed form known as the Ch’ing pao (Smith, 1979).

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

The medium of communication developed from the clay tablet of Mesopotamia, the papyrus roll in ancient Egypt and in ancient Greece, to parchment codex in the Roman empire. By the eighth century, paper introduced from China began to replace parchment in the Islamic world and spread to medieval Europe. Also from China, printing slowly diffused to Europe, aided by the Moors’ occupation of Spain, but it was not until the fifteenth century, with the movable type printing press developed by Johann Gutenberg, a goldsmith in Mainz in Germany, that the means of communication were transformed.
By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the printing presses were turning out thousands of copies of books in all the major European languages. For the first time the Scriptures were available in a language other than Latin, undermining the authority of priests, scribes and political and cultural elites. As a consequence, 'the unified Latin culture of Europe was finally dissolved by the rise of the vernacular languages which was consolidated by the printing press' (Febvre and Martin, 1990: 332). Coupled with vernacular translations of the Bible by John Wycliffe in England and Martin Luther in Germany, the printing revolution helped to lay the basis for the Reformation and the foundations of nation–state and of modern capitalism (Tawney, 1937; Eisenstein, 1979).

The new languages, especially Portuguese, Spanish, English and French, became the main vehicle of communication for the European colonial powers in many parts of the world. This transplantation of communication systems around the globe resulted in the undermining of local languages and cultures of the conquered territories. The Portuguese Empire was one of the first to grasp the importance of the medium for colonial consolidation, with the kings of Portugal sending books in the cargoes of ships carrying explorers. They opened printing presses in the territories they occupied – the first printing press was opened in Goa in 1557 and in Macao in 1588. Other European powers also used the new technology and the printed book played an important role in the colonization of Asia. European languages – especially Portuguese, Spanish, English and French – became the main vehicle of communication for the colonial powers in many parts of the world. This transplantation of communication systems around the globe created a new hierarchy of language and culture in the conquered territories (Smith, 1980).

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

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

The postal reform in England in 1840, initiated by the well-known author, Anthony Trollope as Post-Master General, with the adoption of a
single-rate, one penny postage stamp (the Penny Black), irrespective of distance, revolutionized postal systems. This was followed by the establishment of the Universal Postal Union in 1875 in Berne, under the Universal Postal Convention of 1874, created to harmonize international postal rates and to recognize the principle of respect for the secrecy of correspondence. With the innovations in transport of railways and steamships, international links were being established that accelerated the growth of European trade and consolidated colonial empires.

The growth of the telegraph

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an expanding system of imperial communications made possible by the electric telegraph. Invented by Samuel Morse in 1837, the telegraph enabled the rapid transmission of information, as well as ensuring secrecy and code protection. The business community was first to make use of this new technology. The speed and reliability of telegraphy were seen to offer opportunities for profit and international expansion (Headrick, 1991).

The rapid development of the telegraph was a crucial feature in the unification of the British Empire. With the first commercial telegraph link set up in Britain in 1838, by 1851 a public telegraph service, including a telegraphic money order system, had been introduced. By the end of the century, as a result of the cable connections, the telegraph allowed the Colonial Office and the India Office to communicate directly with the Empire within minutes when, previously, it had taken months for post to come via sea. By providing spot prices for commodities like cotton, the telegraph enabled British merchants, exporting cotton from India or Egypt to England, to easily beat their competitors (Read, 1992).

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

Similarly, during the Civil War in the US (1861–65) over 24,000 kilometres of cable was laid to send more than 6.5 million telegrams. The American Civil War was not only one of the earliest conflicts to be extensively reported, but also the first example both of co-operative news gathering among the American and European journalists, and of the use of photo-journalism.
Imperial Connections
Main British undersea cables 1870-1905

Source: Based on Headrick, 1991
The first underwater telegraphic cable which linked Britain and France became operational in 1851 and the first transatlantic cable, connecting Britain and the USA, in 1866. Between 1851 and 1868, underwater networks were laid down across the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf. During the 1860s and 1870s, London was linked up by cable to the key areas of the Empire (see map, p.15). The first line between Europe and India via Turkey was opened in 1865. Two other cables to India—one overland across Russia and the other undersea via Alexandria and Aden were both started in 1870. India was linked to Hong Kong in 1871 and to Australia in 1872 and Shanghai and Tokyo were linked by 1873 (Read, 1992). By the 1870s, telegraph lines were operating within most countries in Asia and an international communication network, dominated by Britain, was beginning to emerge. The expansion of cable was marked by the rivalry between British and French Empires, which intensified after 1869, with the opening of the Suez Canal.

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

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

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

Undersea cables required huge capital investment, which was met by colonial authorities and by banks, businessmen and the fast-growing newspaper industry, and the cable networks were largely in the hands of the private sector. Of the total cable distance of 104,000 miles, not more than 10
per cent was administered by governments. To regulate the growing internationalization of information, the International Telegraph Union was founded in 1865 with 22 members, all Europeans, except Persia, representing, 'the first international institution of the modern era and the first organisation for the international regulation of a technical network' (Mattelart, 1994: 9).

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

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

(Headrick, 1981: 129–30)

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

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

The outcomes of the two imperial wars – the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Boer War (1899–1902) – strengthened the European and US positions in the world and led to a rapid expansion in world trade that demanded immediate and vastly improved communications links, as well as more advanced naval capabilities. The new technology of 'wireless' telegraphy (also called radiotelegraphy) promised to meet these needs.
In 1901 Guglielmo Marconi harnessed the new discovery of electromagnetism to make the first wireless transatlantic telegraph transmission, with support from naval armament companies and newspaper groups. The British Empire had a great technological advantage since the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of Great Britain dominated global telegraph traffic and had a virtual monopoly on international telegraph exchanges, as it refused to communicate with any other system other than its own. The operators of a Marconi apparatus were prohibited from responding to radio signals emanating from a non-Marconi transmitter, a policy that had the effect of blocking the exchange of critically important information relating to the safe passage of ships. However, at the Berlin Conference on Wireless Telegraphy in 1906 the first multilateral agreements on radiotelegraphy were signed and the International Radiotelegraph Union was born. By 1907 Marconi’s monopoly was being challenged by other European countries as well as the United States.

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

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

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

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

Table 1.1 Cabling the world

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

Source: Based on data from Headrick (1991)

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

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

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

The first international telephone calls were made between Paris and Brussels in 1887. At the end of the nineteenth century, the USA had the largest number of telephones, due largely to the fact that they were manufactured there. International Western Electric, subsidiary of Western Electric, itself owned by AT&T, was the first multinational network of production and sales, setting up branches in most European countries including
Britain, Spain, France and Italy as well as in Japan, China and Australia (Mattelart, 1994). However, the area covered by telephones was very limited – telephone networks acquired a global dimension only in 1956 when the first telephone cable was laid under the Atlantic.

The era of news agencies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The rise of Reuters

Communication was central to the expansion and consolidation of modern European empires, the largest and the most powerful being the British Empire, which at its height, 1880–1914, dominated a quarter of humanity. The fortunes of Reuters, the most famous international news agency, can be seen to run in parallel with the growth of the British Empire.

The expansion of trade and investment during the nineteenth century had led to a huge growth in the demand for news and contributed to the commercialization of news and information services. Reuters astutely exploited this demand, helped by the new communication technologies, especially the telegraph. For British and other European investors Reuters telegrams were essential reading for the latest news from various corners of the British Empire. By 1861 these were being published from more than a hundred datelines, including from the major colonies – India, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

By the 1870s, Reuters had offices in all the major strategic points of the empire – Calcutta, Bombay and Point de Galle on the southern tip of Sri Lanka, the end of the cable connection with London, from where Reuters supervised its services to Southeast Asia, China, Japan and Australia. In 1871, Shanghai became the headquarters of the growing Reuters presence in East Asia, and after the beginning of commercial mining of gold in southern Africa in the late nineteenth century, Cape Town became another nodal point in Reuters’ global network. By 1914, Reuters news service had
International Communication

three main channels covering the empire: London to Bombay; London to Hong Kong via the Mediterranean to Cairo, Aden, Ceylon and Singapore, and another to Cape Town, Durban, Mombasa, Zanzibar, the Seychelles, and Mauritius (Read, 1992).

The expansion of European capitalism had created a pressing need for improved commercial intelligence and with the development of communication, the value of world trade itself grew more than 25-fold between 1800 and 1913. This relationship between capital and communication was an aspect of what has been called ‘the Reuters Factor’, which ‘functions like a multiplier that turns an increase in the supply of information into an increase in business’ (Chanan, 1985: 113).

Reuters also enjoyed very close relationships with the British foreign and colonial administrations. During the second half of the nineteenth century the agency increasingly functioned, in the words of its official historian ‘as an institution of the British Empire’ (Read, 1992: 40). As Britain’s most important colony, India played a ‘central part in the Reuter empire within the British Empire’, constituting a major market for commercial news (Read, 1992: 60). Reuters’ revenues from India more than trebled from 1898 (£11500) to 1918 (£35 200) (ibid. 83).

Though it claimed to be an independent news agency, Reuters was for the most part the unofficial voice of the Empire, giving prominence to British views. This subservience to imperial authority was most prominent during imperial wars such as the Boer War (1899–1902), during which agency reports supported the British cause and the British troops. In the same way Reuters news from India was mostly related to economic and political developments in the Empire and largely ignored the anti-colonial movement.

Defending the Empire came naturally to Reuters: in 1910 Reuters started an imperial news service and a year later, the agency made a secret arrangement with the British Government under which it offered to circulate on its wires official speeches to every corner of the Empire, in return for an annual fee of £500 from the Colonial Office. During the First World War, Reuters launched a wartime news service by arrangement with the Foreign Office, which by 1917 was circulating about one million words per month throughout the Empire.

Reuters’ Managing Director during the war years, George Jones, was also in charge of cable and wireless propaganda for the British Department of Information. Though this service was separate from the main Reuters wire service, whose support for the war was more subtle, it rallied opinion within the Empire and influenced the attitudes of the neutral countries. As one British official wrote in 1917, ‘At Reuters the work done is that of an independent news agency of an objective character, with propaganda secretly infused’ (quoted in Read, 1992: 127–8).

Though this service was discontinued after the end of the war, Reuters entered into another agreement with the Foreign Office under which the agency would circulate specific messages on its international wires, to be paid for by the government. This agreement remained in force until the Second World War. However, apart from support from the government the major reason for the continued success of Reuters was the fact that it ‘sold useful information enabling businesses to trade profitably’ (Lawrenson and Barber, 1985: 179).

The wider availability of wireless technology after the First World War enabled Reuters in 1920 to launch a trade service, which became a crucial component of the
economic life of the Empire. New technology made it easier to send and receive more international industrial and financial information at a faster speed. As the globe was being connected through trans-oceanic trade, such information — for example, New York prices for Indian cotton — had a high premium for traders who were depending on the accuracy of Reuters commodity prices and stock market news from around the world.

Reuters' domination of international information was helped by its being a member of the cartel and it remained the world news leader between 1870 to 1914. But the weakening of the British Empire and the ascendancy of the USA forced Reuters to compete with the American news agencies, especially Associated Press, with which it signed, in 1942, a wartime news-sharing agreement, effectively creating a new cartel for news. In the post-war period, Reuters continued to focus on commercial information, realizing that in order to succeed in a free trade environment, it had to work towards integration of commodity, currency, equity and financial markets, 'around the clock and around the world' (Tunstall and Palmer, 1991: 46).

By 1999, Reuters was one of the world's biggest multimedia corporations dealing 'in the business of information', supplying global financial markets and the news media with a range of information and news products, including 'real-time financial data, collective investment data, numerical, textual, historical and graphical databases plus news, graphics, news video, and news pictures'. In the past five years to 1998, financial information products revenue accounted for 64 per cent of the total while media products revenue accounted for less than 7 per cent of the total revenue (Reuters Annual Report, 1999).

By the end of the twentieth century, what had been started in 1851 by entrepreneur Julius Reuter, whom Karl Marx called 'a grammatically illiterate Jew' (quoted in Read, 1992: 26), had become the world's largest provider of financial data, besides being the largest news and television agency with nearly 2 000 journalists in 183 bureaux, serving 157 countries. Its news was gathered and edited for both business and media clients in 23 languages, more than 3 million words were published each day. With 1998 revenue of £3032 million, Reuters was one of the world's largest media and information corporations, with regional headquarters in London, New York, Geneva and Hong Kong, and offices in 217 cities (Reuters Annual Report, 1999).

One major growth area for the agency which started sending news and commercial information via pigeon in its early years, is the Internet, given the steady growth in online trading. By 1999, it was providing news and information to over 225 internet sites reaching an estimated 12 million viewers per month. It was planning a global news service on the Internet and had created Reuters Ventures to co-ordinate its on-line operations which include a joint venture with Dow Jones to provide a business database (Barrie and Martinson, 1999).

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The advent of popular media

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

![Figure 1.1 A century of advertising: US advertising spend, 1900–99](image-url)
Radio and international communication

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

At the 1906 international radiotelegraph conference in Berlin, 28 states debated radio equipment standards and procedures to minimize interference. The great naval powers, who were also the major users of radio (Britain, Germany, France, the USA and Russia), had imposed a regime of radio frequency allocation, allowing priority to the country that first notified the International Radiotelegraph Union of its intention to use a specific radio frequency (Mattelart, 1994).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Fascist Italy, under Benito Mussolini, a Ministry of Print and Propaganda was created to promote Fascist ideals and win public opinion
for colonial campaigns such as the invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1935, and support for Francisco Franco’s Fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Mussolini also distributed radio sets to Arabs, tuned to one station alone – Radio Bari in southern Italy. This propaganda prompted the British Foreign Office to create a monitoring unit of the BBC to listen in to international broadcasts and later to start an Arabic language service to the region.

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

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

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

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

Until the Second World War radio in the USA was known more for its commercial potential as a vehicle for advertisements rather than a govern-
ment propaganda tool, but after 1942, the year the Voice of America (VOA) was founded, the US Government made effective use of radio to promote its political interests – a process which reached its high point during the decades of Cold War.

The Cold War – from communist propaganda to capitalist persuasion

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

Soviet broadcast propaganda

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

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

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