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NEWS AGENCY AND FOREIGN CORESPONDENT

1. How is the portrayal of the Global South by the North news Organisations/Media?
2. What are the challenges a foreign correspondent is likely to face in these times, especially with Corona Virus, Racism and all other Fears in view? Proffer the solutions you think will overcome the challenges you raise.

Question 1.

The Global South is an emerging term, used by the World Bank and other organizations, identifying countries with one side of the underlying global North–South divide, the other side being the countries of the Global North. As such the term does not inherently refer to a geographical south, for example most of the Global South is within the Northern Hemisphere.

The term was first introduced as a more open and value free alternative to "third world" and similar valuing terms.

Countries of the Global South have been described as newly industrialized or in the process of industrializing, are largely considered by freedom indices to have lower-quality democracies, and frequently have a history of colonialism by Northern, often European states. The BRIC countries, Brazil, India and China, with the exception of Russia and along with Indonesia, have the largest populations economies among Southern states.[citation needed] The overwhelming majority of these countries are located in or near the tropics and have at least one neglected tropical disease.

Although some newspapers and broadcasting organisations use their own journalists to report on major world events, the so-called global news agencies have been the workhorses and lynchpins of the international news system (Hachten 1992). Boyd-Barrett (1998) calls global news agencies "wholesalers" who collect news worldwide and sell it to "retailers" like national and other local news agencies, suppliers of news to the internet, and other "consumers" like businesses, financial institutions, governments and private individuals.

It is commonly accepted that since the 1990s there have been three major global news agencies: Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and Agence France Presse (AFP) (Boyd-Barrett 1998; Rantanen & Boyd-Barrett 2009). A fourth agency, United Press International (UPI) in the USA, has waned over the past decade (Rampal 2007; Thussu 2006). Despite the fact that these companies, because of the scope of their activities, may rightly be considered global corporations, they have all retained their links with a particular nation state. Thus AFP is associated with France, AP with the USA and Reuters with Great Britain. What makes these agencies truly global agencies is their capability to report news from even the remotest corner of the world to almost everywhere else (Hachten 1992).

Although Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA) in Germany and Spain’s EFE are playing an important role especially within their respective regions (Hachten 1992), Rantanen and Boyd-Barrett (2009) do not count them under the truly great global agencies. Boyd-Barrett (1998) furthermore does not rate the agencies of the former Soviet Union, ITAR-TASS, and China's Xinhua among the major global role players, because there is no clear dividing line between their activities as news agencies and as government departments. They do not function as commercial companies and in normal circumstances are not paid to supply news to their respective governments. The influence of ITAR-TASS (still a government controlled agency) has declined sharply following the emergence of alternative Russian news sources like the private company Interfax and regional companies in the states of the Russian federation (Rampal 2007). ITAR-TASS and Xinhua continue to play a major role as news sources in Russia and China. but not in the supply of news to other countries. Another Asian agency is the Japanese Kyodo which has an English-language service and a decent international presence, based on 50 locations overseas (Thussu 2006). However, what distinguishes the three global giants from these other agencies is the ability to penetrate markets different from their own home ground (Rantanen & Boyd-Barrett 2009). Whereas the three global agencies have succeeded to penetrate non-Western markets successfully, the same cannot be said of agencies associated with a particular region such as Xinhua and Kyodo.

Some of the largest newspapers in the world such as the Times, Daily Telegraph, Financial Times and Guardian of London; Le Monde of France; the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, the Wall Street Journal, and others in the USA; the Frankfurter Allgemeine in Germany; as well as news magazines such as Time, Newsweek, the Economist, L’Express and Der Spiegel, maintain their own correspondents in many parts of the world (Hachten 1992). Newspapers such as the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times also syndicate their news and sell news to other newspapers in the USA and abroad. In this sense, these newspapers compete as well as cooperate with the global news agencies.

However, none of the other role players offer a real alternative to the influence of the three major global news agencies (Rantanen & Boyd-Barrett 2009). Hence one may conclude that the number of "voices" on the global news scene is relatively small.

Examples: Freedom of the press or freedom of the media is the principle that communication and expression through various media, including printed and electronic media, especially published materials, should be considered a right to be exercised freely. Such freedom implies the absence of interference from an overreaching state; its preservation may be sought through constitution or other legal protection and security.

With respect to governmental information, any government may distinguish which materials are public or protected from disclosure to the public. State materials are protected due to either of 2 reasons: the classification of information as sensitive, classified or secret, or the relevance of the information to protecting the national interest. Many governments are also subject to "sunshine laws" or freedom of information legislation that are used to define the ambit of national interest and enable citizens to request access to government-held information.

The United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers"

This philosophy is usually accompanied by legislation ensuring various degrees of freedom of scientific research (known as scientific freedom), publishing, and press. The depth to which these laws are entrenched in a country's legal system can go as far down as its constitution. The concept of freedom of speech is often covered by the same laws as freedom of the press, thereby giving equal treatment to spoken and published expression. Sweden was the first country in the world to adopt freedom of the press into its constitution with the Freedom of the Press Act of 1766

The geographical boundaries of the Global South remain a source of debate. Critics and scholars like Andrea Hollington, Oliver Tappe, Tijo Salverda and Tobias Schwarz agree that the term is not a "static concept."Others, like Rodolfo Magallanes, have argued against "grouping together a large variety of countries and regions into one category [because it] tends to obscure specific (historical) relationships between different countries and/or regions" and the power imbalances within these relationships. He argues that this "may obscure wealth differences within countries – and, therefore, similarities between the wealthy in the Global South and Global North, as well as the dire situation the poor may face all around the world."

Question 2.

A foreign correspondent is a journalist who is responsible for reporting news from another country. This may mean covering anything from wars to politics to living conditions and attitudes in this country. "Foreign correspondents do all kinds of work," says Maria Trombly.

Challenges of Foreign correspondence

Foreign correspondence is the reportage and filing of new stories by a Journalist known as a foreign correspondent (who works for a media organization) from a foreign country. A Foreign correspondent is a journalist who sends news reports and commentary from a foreign country for publication or broadcast. His is an agent who contributes reports to a newspaper, radio or television, from a remote, often distant location. The foreign correspondent is stationed in a foreign country. Challenges are the part of every job and journalism is not escaped from it. This profession invites maximum number of challenges and a correspondent has to take them as part of his/her occupation. According to a famous journalist, “the biggest challenge for a today’s journalist is to survive”. Foreign correspondence, even from a layman’s perspective has a lot of challenges especially because the Journalist has to leave his/her own country for another country that he/she is not familiar with. The challenges of foreign correspondence are:

· The cost of operation has risen, not only as a result of economic meltdown but also because of the advent of new technology. The media organizations have to make sure they do not get out of business as a result of citizen Journalism, which has come to stay. The economic situation all over the world has made many countries call back their foreign correspondent and close down news bureaus. The advent of new media technology has even made it easier for the extent of foreign correspondence. These new technologies, made it possible that correspondents are not sent abroad, before news information are gotten from reliable sources. Reporters can now sit in the comfort of the newsroom, access the internet and gather necessary information. The technological progress over the past years has enabled large parts of the general public to access and afford new ways of interaction and communication via the internet’s new intelligent web services and fast broadband connections. Personal digital assistance (PDA); in form of Androids, Smartphone, Tablets, etc. is also not encouraging media houses and agencies to send foreign correspondents on assignments. This is because individuals are now becoming citizen journalists, providing user generated content and relegating to the ground the function of the foreign correspondent. A media organization or agency, that is not buoyant financially, might find it difficult to send foreign correspondents on assignment because money is needed for transportation, accommodation, feeding and other things that will keep the foreign correspondent going.

· The problem of language barrier, which is very common but can be avoided. Being a foreign correspondent means you report happenings in countries outside your country. The language in this foreign country is most definitely different from what is spoken in your own country; this may pose as a challenge to the foreign correspondence. This is why foreign correspondents need to possess a bilingual skill. The foreign correspondent should at least have a working knowledge of the language of the country of assignment. Foreign correspondence should learn international languages that will give him/her edge during an assignment and also make it easy to interact with people in the country of assignment. Languages can be learn in school or prior to an assignment while on the job.

· Wars, disputes and ripple are major challenges faced by foreign correspondents and why many upcoming communication students avoid foreign journalism and journalism as a whole. Countries are made up of people with different perspectives and ideologies on issues. These differences when not well managed results to dispute and if not still curbed, may result to wars. During situations like these, foreign correspondents and reporters in general are injured, maimed or killed. Correspondence have to take protective measures while reporting wars because, it might entail reporting from the war front.

Foreign correspondents often have to visit places which are badly struck by natural calamities like floods, heavy snowfall, volcanoes, etc,. In order to keep the authorities alert,of the affected area towards the welfare and rescue mission of the people, foreign correspondents have to visit the worst hit areas as well. This could also pose a serious threat to their lives as well. In some unfortunate accidents, foreign correspondents have suffered injuries while covering stories in dangerous places.

Foreign correspondence is also followed by assignments, like covering a war zone, communal riots, and infiltrations in borders, civil wars and much more perilous coverage. The spread of insecurity in a country not only threatens the lives the people of that place, but foreign correspondents also become their targets. Many terrorist organizations do not hesitate to kill them; they accuse journalists for supporting the government authorities and security forces. Sometimes these consequences can turn fatal.

Foreign correspondence are also held hostage and detained during conflicts between the countries. It is really traumatic and sometimes situations can become extremely dangerous for the captured media professional/s.

· The foreign correspondent is also faced with cultural challenges. The foreign correspondent if not conversant with the culture of his place of assignment will have problems. The culture of the place of assignment of the foreign correspondent is usually different from that of his/her country. The correspondent has to learn the culture of the people; the dress sense, what they eat, different seasons in the country, courtesy among the people, their way of live, the laws of the land (dos and don’ts) and the language and it’s usage. To know all these, the correspondence must read extensively. Foreign correspondents at times find it difficult to eat some types of food in their place of assignment; at times they break some rules not knowing they are breaking them. The correspondence also has to take note of the seasons so as to bring the appropriate clothing. For example if a reporter is sent from Nigeria and assumes the weather of Nigeria is similar to that of New York’s, he will probably have to freeze and develop cold. Some things that are accepted one country may not be accepted in other countries, things might be much more different in the place of assignment of the correspondent. This is why it is important to study the culture of the host country. A foreign correspondent must have a knowledge and appreciation of the history of the region concerned. So much news today evolves from events, decisions or incidents from years back and which puts things in context. You must be conversant with history to be able to analyze events with real authority and thus boost your credibility as someone who knows what he/she is talking about. It is certainly the case for print reporters, who are expected also to write lengthy analytical pieces and features about developments and what they all mean.

· Political instability is another problem faced by a foreign correspondent. When there is political instability in a country, a correspondent will not be able to carry out his assignment effectively. He might even be sent back to his country. A foreign correspondent might not be able to carry out in his country of assignment when there is political upheaval.

Many western countries have “freedom of the press” but not all the countries give this right to their media professionals. In many countries media does not have freedom to speech and journalists (foreign correspondent) have to adhere with the set norms before writing or publishing a story, else they have to face dire consequences. This is called self-censorship. The foreign correspondent is often oppressed by the governments of his place of assignment. The foreign correspondent in some countries is not supposed to show any videos which could malign the government for violating human rights and taking innocent lives and creating havoc. The foreign correspondent also has some roles to play. He has to have a thorough knowledge of various political philosophy operation in his place of assignment i.e. should know the difference between capitalism which is operated in U.S and western Europe and communism a variance of socialism still practiced in China, Cuba of North Korea. He should have the knowledge of authoritarianism, fascism and totalitarianism, which are almost stale. The knowledge of these philosophies will help the correspondent know what step to take in case of any situation. He should have a wide knowledge of the constitution of his country of assignment. The constitution is the primary law upon which a country is governed. This will also save him the trouble of asking too many questions about the political parties because the constitution gives the reporter access to the conduct of political parties in his country of assignment.

· The foreign correspondence should have knowledge of the economy of his country of assignment. At times foreign correspondence makes the mistake of reporting wrong figures. He should be familiar with economic terms like inflation, and its effect on the economy, the lives of the citizens and the causes of the inflation, demand, supply, deficit, budget and deflation. To do this the correspondent has to maintain contact with experts on the field. He should be able to interpret data, charts and graphs.

· Another challenge of foreign correspondence is that the correspondence will require additional training to master other skills. The Job of a foreign correspondent requires him to have other skills aside reporting. The old days when a Television foreign correspondent was nothing more than a reporter who telexed, faxed or later emailed his/her copy once or twice a day and did nothing else, leaving the cameraman to handle the pictures, are over. Today's foreign correspondent is on duty 24 hours a day and has to be versatile with technology and in some cases do everything. However, despite all intense challenges in foreign correspondence some foreign correspondent are determined to do their jobs with full dedications and nothing could deter them.

FCs are responsible for proposing their subject. Most of the stories cover economics, financial and monetary issues

How FCs report EU news is largely dependent on public opinion in the countries where the media outlets are based.

The problem facing FCs is that more and more they’re reproducing the EU’s own communication. There is too much factual reporting and not enough analysis, commentary and investigation.

There is an overdose of information from the EU institutions which drowns journalists.

FCs have to grapple with explaining difficult decision-making procedures and constantly changing aims, rules and membership.

The main challenge FCs face is trying to make complex, bureaucratic or highly political issues interesting and relevant for the public they serve.

The EU struggles to get media coverage because a lot of work that goes on in Brussels is boring but important or important but boring. News desks believe their audiences find stories about Brussels too boring and technical. Brussels lack sufficient drama and well-known personalities to make good copy, especially TV journalists. Popular newspapers rarely have a permanent correspondent in Brussels.

Another challenge is that the EU is about finding consensus between 28 often divergent natural viewpoints. But journalism is largely about conflict among ideas, states and people. This makes life difficult for FCs.

Other obstacles include deciphering and translating EU jargon into every day speech.

FCs who cover the EU concentrate on what its proposals, debates and decisions mean for their country of origin. The EU is less often covered as a centre of European power, more often as an adjunct to national politics.

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