**A Coordinated Review of Chris Nwamuo’s Perspectives on the Dynamics of International Communication**

**By**

**Stanislaus Iyorza (Ph.D**

**Department of Mass Communication**

**University of Calabar,**

**Calabar**

**Introduction**

At the age of 70 years, Professor Chris Nwamuo is still breaking new grounds in the Theatre, Media and Communication disciplines, not only in the University of Calabar, but also in Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) in Cross River State Nigeria, Abia State University in Abia State, Nigeria and many other state, national and international higher institutions of learning. He is tireless in research, clinical in project supervision, stern in the resolution of academic knots and committed to teaching students both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. One would imagine that despite the ever busy schedule of this prolific scholar, including his attendance to family affairs, he still has the time to write out his findings, thoughts and perspectives in the very field that he has worked for more than three decades.

One of his most recent works is his book “T*he Dynamics of International Communication”* published in 2016*.* Communication is the human nutrient that grows a healthy relationship among people and nations of the world. When absent or not properly handled, communication effects result to rumor, grapevines, conflict or in internationally severe cases, war. ‘Communication’ as a term is surrounded by mysteries of comprehension but Nwamuo has attempted an unraveling throughout his years of academic surgeon in the field. Ike (2005:40) define communication as the process by which people share information, ideas and feelings using spoken and written words, body language, personal mannerism and style, the physical environment or anything that adds meaning to a message. Iyorza (2015:11) views communication as the transmission of information, idea or beliefs from the encoder to the decoder with the aim of achieving a common ground of understanding, promoting a course or reacting to given stimuli in the communication encounter. Both definitions share a common characteristic: information or ideas sharing or transmission.

The complexity of communication is appreciated when considered at different levels: intra-personal and group communication levels. Other levels include mass communication, traditional communication and international communication. Chris Nwamuo’s focus on international communication is apparently an object of terminological demystification, expansion of academic knowledge frontiers and current world trends in the relationship among some nations on the continent. The problem of international communication is shrouded in the dynamics of the discipline that Nwamuo attempts to transport to limelight. Ojorgu (2011:55) defines dynamism in communication as the economic, cultural, special or religious world-wide evolution orchestrated by the global media.

**International Communication**

Nwamuo’s ‘The Dynamics of International Communication’ attempts a definition, an origin and a presentation of dimensions upon which the process strives. Nwamuo (2016:3) defines international communication as “classically a government to government or more accurately, government representatives to governmental representatives’ affair” which involves topics and issues that relate to the nations as entities; broad issues of trade and conflict resolution. Ike (2005:116) expands Nwamuo’s definition thus:

International communication is planned information dissemination across national boundaries carried out by a country to promote its activities in the areas of economic, trade, politics, history, arts and culture. For the advanced countries, it is an instrument of cultural domination and neocolonialism. And for emergent nation, they are means of asserting themselves and articulating their view points on global conflict issues.

The above definition clearly shows that Nwamuo shares similar views with great scholars in the area of communication and as such has proven a reliable academic egg head in the field. It also indicates the research value of Professor Chris Nwamuo who recounts that the invention of the steam engine technology and the telegraph in the nineteenth century later led – to a great extent – the commercialization of mass print media, permitting the setting of internationally operating news agencies such as the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Wolff and Agence France Press (AFP). Nwamuo (2016:4-5) states that the origin of international communication was facilitated by the invention of the telegraph, world wire and cable systems which have advanced new technologies that facilitated the establishment of internationally operating media systems such as CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera which disseminate news across the globe at the speed of light.

Nwamuo (2016:6-10) identifies technology, telecommunications, cultural products, cultural relations, language and mails as the dimensions of international communication. The discourse on these dimensions is quite vast, but Nwamuo’s previous focus are more on the emphases on technology. Technology is a system or collection of procedures, tools, machinery, including electronics, designed to meet some needs or solve some existing problems. The technology in question in this context is the information technology which Ike (2005:113) defines as any system or tool involved in acquiring, storing, processing and distributing information by electronic means. This includes radio, television, computers, electronic newspapers and billboards and many more. Adeyemo (2010:48) and Ojedokun (2010) recount that since its advent in the 20th century, Information and Communication Technology continues to have a landmark impact on human relations, and social structure world wide.

Nwamuo and Ekpang (2008:121-123) share the opinion that the western world is consciously propagating the view that most Africa cultures are not only obnoxious but also unprogressive and therefore, should be abandoned for their “modern culture”. This view is massively propagated and promoted by the international technology of information and technology. These technologies also approximate transnational cultures as one world homogenous culture which Ferguson (2002) challenged upon Mcluhan’s theory of a global village. The major point of argument against cultural homogeneity as posited by Nwamuo and Ekpang (2008:122) is that identical consumer products, movies, clothes and architectural expressions are not seen in every nation.

**Theoretical Review**

Nwamuo examines some theories that have warranted the smooth operations of international communication. He identifies the ‘*Free Flow of Information theory* as having its roots in the serious ideological battle which opposed the capitalist block and the socialist block from the 70s to 90s (the cold war). The theory was conceived by the Western capitalists to champion the rights of the media properties together and sell information wherever they wished. Citing Thussu (2000:56), Nwamuo explains that the free flow of information theory actually fervidly advocated that the capitalists freely advertise and market their goods and services in foreign markets through the instrumentality of media vehicles “whose information and entertainment products championed the western way of life and its values of capitalism and individualism”.

Nwamuo (2016:15) considers *the modernization theory* as another operational platform for the success of an unbalanced international communication at the expense of African cultures. He identifies Daniel Lerner (1958) and Schrman Wilbur (1964) as the two main proponents of the modernization theory which is grounded on the assumption that the mass media are potentially very instrumental in transforming societies from traditional to developed worlds. Nwamuo also describes the modernization theory as an advocate of non-cultural sensitivity; the modernization of culture in poor countries to the detriment of core vernacular cultural values.

*The Dependency Theory* from Nwamuo (2016:17)’s perspective was developed in the 60s and 70s in Latin America. The theory assumes that the development of the metropolis (the developed West) did not provoke similar development in Third World countries, and the results is the dependence of the satellite nations on the metropolis. As applied in international communication scholarship, the Dependency theory is of the view that transnational corporations which are mostly based in the west exercise great control over developing countries by setting the terms for global trade, especially through the international marketing communication activities. The inviting offers in the communication appeals to the sense of third world countries’ dependence on the developed nations.

*The media Imperialism Theory*as perceived by Nwanwuo (2016:18) is regarded as a complex process whereby a country’s media structure, ownership and distribution of content of the media are individually or jointly subject to huge external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected. The implication of this thought explains that there is still a form of imbalance in international communication between the developed and third world nations.

Nwamuo (2016:20) uses the *Political Economy Theory* to explain that the media of mass communication are both politically and economically determined by certain forces. In this case, the theory supports the idea that by the rich political economy of the western nations, the developed countries extend their ideologies and economic messages that support their trades through the channels of international communication. Whereas, their rich political economies allow them the financial abilities to foot the high bills for international communication that is quite unaffordable for the relatively poor economies of most third world nations.

**Dynamic Operations of International Communication**

Nwamuo (2016:23) posits that international news agencies and transnational cooperation contribute tremendously to shaping the structure of the global news flow in the global news market space. Their methods of gathering, packaging and disseminating information and cultural products have enabled them to survive neo forms of competitions. These news agencies are typified according to three denominations namely:

1. Global news agencies (such as Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and the Agence France Presses)
2. Regional news agencies (notably the Pan African News Agency (PANA) and
3. National news agencies such as the Nigerian News Agency (NNA)

In terms of operations, Nwamuo (2016:25) recounts that the international news agencies report information at reduced level of responsibility, attributing their information to a spokeman, the press, or other sources. They avoid making judgements and steer clear of doubts and ambiguity. Their operational philosophical basis is objectivity or neutrality. The global expansion and popularity of these news agencies could be attributed to the increasing demand among business clients for commercial information and the adoption of innovative methods in news dissemination.

Nwamuo (2016:27) also identify regional news agencies and big news corporations to include (CNN’s International Channels, the BBC world service and Television (BBC – WS – TV), Al Jazera (based in Quater) and the Zee – TV) dedicated principally to threating Indian audiences world wide. Their growing influence tends to redefine the nature of news flows in the global news market. However, they are biased in some way to favour the political, economic and social interests of the developed countries. They set the global news and communication agenda, reflect the cultural values and philosophies defended by the host nations of the international news agencies and make the international audience to see the world from the angle of the dominant global or transnational news agencies.

Nwamuo (2016:30-31) sums up his views on the operations of the news agencies and transnational corporations in the global news market space thus:

…by transmitting to developing countries only news processed by them, that is, news which they have filtered, cut, and distorted, the transnational media impose their own way of seeing the world upon the developing countries, engendering a serious controversy known as the world information and communication (Dis) order debate… over news reports circulated in the world.

The authors view is interpreted to support the assertion that the contents of news reports circulated in the world is mainly tailored according to western cultural values; contributing to positively construct the image of the west, while tarnishing that of most third worlds, particularly African countries. Specifically, a continent like Africa is most often pointed in negative light as war-ridden, infested by a myriad of social ills including corruption, election malpractices, piracy, poverty and the like. Nwamuo (2016:31) argues that “while such ills are somehow present in some African countries, they do not represent the only characteristics and prisms from which the continent should be viewed.

**Conclusion**

Nwamuo (an erudite Professor of Theatre, Media and International Communication) has expressed his concerns about international communication basically as imbalanced between the developed countries of the West and the developing countries or Third World nations especially those on the African continent. The author who posits his views mainly in one of his latest works: *The Dynamics of International Communication* has greatly implicated the international or global media, specifically the international and regional news agencies and transitional corporations in the global news market space. His core views are summarily represented thus:

1. The establishment of international and regional news agencies including Reuter, Associated Press and Agence France Presses from Britain, the US and France among many others has greatly defined the worlds information and communication order.
2. The existence of the news agencies and big news corporations has also defined the international media theories in the academia including the theory of free flow information, the modernization theory, the dependency theory, the theory of media imperialism and the Political Economy Theory.
3. The news agencies and big news corporations are major instruments of international communication and have promoted the interest of the developed countries of the west against the political, economic and social interests of the third world countries especially those on the African continent.

Although these views have been expanded upon by several scholars, Professor Nwamuo’s scholarly discourse in this direction has sparked further recommendations from some of his students. Iyorza (2009:79) and Ekpang (2008:125) recommend that:

1. African governments should invest in the industrialization policy to pursue high development rates and assume total independence of other capitalist countries of Europe, America and Japan.
2. All world information and communication channels should be regulated by a constituted international broadcast organization made up of skillful emphasis from diverse cultural background across all continents to ensure that global communication channels respect the rights of all people to participate in international exchanges of information on the basis of equality, justice and mutual benefits; based on the foundational principles of international law as laid down in the charter of the United Nations.
3. The African union should establish global media channels in their individual countries under the umbrella of African Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) where African news would dominate and cultural goods and services could be packed and transmitted to other parts of the world.
4. African governments should initiate a cultural revival in the mould of FESTAC (Festival of Arts and Culture and should follow up with a vigorous programme of cultural re-orientation with a view to harmonizing cultures across the African continent.
5. African media organizations should go into mergers and acquisitions as was done and is still done in the West. This will expectedly produce large media corporations that would have the financial muscle to acquire new and advanced technologies.

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