UNIT 2
INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION
FLOW AND IMBALANCE

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to inform you about the ‘wealth’ called ‘information’ and its free flow, which has caused an imbalance between the developed and underdeveloped nations. We shall also discuss the consequences of this imbalance, the debates on imbalance, and how international community got divided as a result of such debates.

At the end of your study of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain why information is considered wealth;
- define and explain the concept of imbalance in the flow of information between the ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ nations;
- identify news items from the international agencies causing this imbalance; and
- analyse the causes of imbalance.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This block on International Communication consists of four units. You have already been informed about various international information agencies and organizations in Unit 1. We shall begin with a discussion on the value of information. We shall discuss how information flows between the underdeveloped and developed countries. The Second World, made up of the then Socialist countries, will also surface in our discussion. The concept of the free flow of information will be explained. We shall also deal with the whole debate of imbalance and how it originated. Towards the end, we shall say how information is linked with trade, economy, aid and relations among nations. We shall also catch up with the latest development of the media in the international arena.

2.2 INFORMATION AS WEALTH AND POWER

Information can be defined as facts about an event, a place, a person, or whatever is communicated, by a person or persons to another person or persons. Information can also be considered as a raw material. As and when this raw material is put in the proper context with other facts or activities, the human mind is able to understand and analyse the situation and
respond to it. This can be called 'knowledge'. Mere facts do not generate knowledge. The human minds in interaction with facts produce knowledge. This knowledge has helped and is helping the human race generation after generation. Knowledge is wealth, and when this wealth is used properly, it brings power.

Consider this example: now-a-days, there is a genuine movement to eradicate illiteracy from our country. We are really concerned that, even after 46 years of independence, the majority of our people cannot read and write. It is not a question of learning the 3 Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic. There is more to it. Literacy makes a person free from the age-old bondage of ignorance. Literacy empowers a person with tools to analyse his environment and act or react to it rationally. A literate person can easily get information about health, family planning, agriculture, deforestations, laws enacted by the Parliament, etc. A person empowered with literacy can collect information to create knowledge for decision-making. Therefore, it can be said that literacy makes a person able to collect information (wealth) with which he acquires power to lead his/her own life. This power and wealth are real in economic and monetary terms.

Take another example. Science has given us the tools to find out whether or not a certain geographical area has oil or some mineral beneath the ground. A person equipped with such tools will be able to gather information about its existence. If the information is positive, then that particular person, company or country, which has employed him will be able to benefit from the underground reserves in concrete economic terms. And this economical benefit will bring a tremendous amount of power.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: i) Use space below for your answer.
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Explain why information is considered 'Wealth' and 'Power'.

2.2.1 Information-rich West

In this unit, we shall refer to the developed countries situated in the Western hemisphere simply as West, that is, countries of the Western Europe and North America. These countries, since the 15th century, undertook various expeditions to know the world beyond the seas. The traders undertook long voyages to expand their business. Kings conquered other countries to enlarge their kingdoms and bring new nations under their rule. All these activities helped the European countries to gather information, constantly, to create knowledge for their own economical and political benefits. Take the example of the Great Britain. There was a time when it was said, "The sun never sets on the British Empire". It was information alone that helped the British to exploit its colonies for centuries. As science progressed, the instruments to gather information became more sophisticated. As a result, the West always remained years ahead of the underdeveloped countries in the information technology.

You have definitely got a fair idea about the networks and operation of the international news agencies in the previous unit. The Reuters of Britain, Agence France Presse (AFP) of France, the United Press International (UPI), Associated Press (AP) of the USA, and ITAR-TASS of Russia, have complex networks to gather information and feed the world with hundreds of stories everyday. These global agencies make money through subscriptions, and are sustained by multinational corporations of newspapers, the governments and the corporate sector, with perhaps the sole exception of ITAR-TASS.

Apart from the news agencies, the western countries have information agencies to gather facts or data, and disseminate the same after proper packaging.
2.2.2 Information Poverty in the Underdeveloped Countries

We have just seen the magnitude of the information network of the news agencies that are utilized by the West. A completely opposite state of information network is in existence in the underdeveloped countries. The flow of information within some of the developing or underdeveloped nations, particularly in Africa, is so weak that it takes days for information to travel from the place of origin to other corners of the country. Even the telephone systems are old and dilapidated. The existing news agencies in most of the countries of the Third World have a very weak network, and work with the old technology left over from the colonial times. Only a few countries like India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil, Nigeria and Kenya are able to afford news agencies, and are slowly getting into the information business. Above all, qualified and competent people shun away from this business of information. Thus, both in terms of hardware and software, the situation is deplorable. Most of the underdeveloped countries are in utter poverty. One important point has to be made here. Some of the underdeveloped countries have made some progress in the field of information, but this progress, when compared to the existing situation in the developed countries, looks so small and inadequate.

Thus, unlike the developed world, the underdeveloped countries have failed to use information to create knowledge, which, as and when applied, would produce wealth and power. Hence, as far as information is concerned, the West has information in abundance, while the underdeveloped countries, caught in the vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy, have not capitalised on information technology.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: i) Use space below for your answers.
ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) How does the West convert information into Wealth and Power?
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2) Why do you think the underdeveloped countries suffer from information poverty?
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2.3 HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION

Till now, in this unit, we have discussed the value of information to create knowledge which, in turn, brings in wealth and power. Here, in this sub-section we shall discuss the historical development of international information in the West, the Communist and Socialist states, and the newly independent Third World countries. Such an overview, will help us to clearly understand how and why the conflict between the West and the Third World countries spilled over into the international in the '70s and '80s.

2.3.1 Advantageous Position of the First World Countries

Most of the European countries started expanding beyond their shores from the 15th century, for various reasons, political, economic and religious. They reached Africa, Asia and Latin America, the raw materials of which attracted more and more traders from the West. But once these countries were politically subjugated, their control over economic
The nations — Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands — which built empires in Asia, Africa and Latin America invested all their profit, extracted from these colonies in their own countries. Therefore, the capital formation was at a tremendous pace and in unimaginable quantity. Whereas, in these colonies, there was no investment, the capital formation was absolutely nil. This continued for centuries. In the meantime, because of unprecedented capital formation, at the centre, the colonial powers ventured into new areas for economic gains. Education, health, research, technology, and other areas got improved in these countries because of the economical advantages that these countries acquired by colonization.

New thinking and research to improve the mode of production got a tremendous boost. These brought a revolution in different fields. We talk about the industrial revolution in Europe. But this revolution did not happen in isolation. The whole socio-economic environment was prepared for and created by that revolution. Many such mini-revolutions were taking place in the European society. An unstoppable momentum of change, evolution, and growth continued there.

Such influence could come about due to the strong economic base of the West, built from the wealth of the colonies. Information played a crucial role for them to hold on to their advantageous position. They used a huge amount of capital to set up a complex and efficient information network. Today's major communication instruments, such as the telephone, telefax, and satellite, etc., exist because of the efforts put in for centuries. These efforts were largely undisturbed and without any resistance. As a result, these countries have radio stations with high-powered transmission facilities, like the Voice of America, British Broadcasting Corporation, Deutch Welle and Radio Japan. The television networks are hooked up with a satellite to cater to the whole world, like CNN, NBC, BBC and Star TV. The five giant news agencies of the United Press International, Associated Press, Agence France Presse, ITAR-TASS and Reuters have totally wired the world. These historical developments of the infrastructure have given the West a position of dominance and pre-eminence.

Check Your Progress 3
Notes:  
1) Write five sentences on how the West has become information rich.

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2.3.2 The Closed Situation in Socialist Countries

The fall of the Czar and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, in 1917, have radically changed the equations among nations. Armed with the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx, the revolutionaries, led by Lenin, ushered in a new era for the working class — the proletariat in Russia. The state owned everything, private property was abolished and everything belonged to the commune to be used for the common good. However, the communist regimes established in Eastern Europe before and after World War II converted their own secluded world. China followed Russia, and under the leadership of Mao-ze-Dong captured power and ushered in communism.

The communist countries centralised all their activities, especially information, which was put under heavy censorship. The secret service agencies, such as KGB, were created to neutralise any non-communist effort to sabotage the effort of the communist regimes. This was largely on the lines of the CIA and the McCarthyist forces, which launched an anti-communist drive in the USA during the early ’50s. The communication and information networks in socialist countries were all-pervading. The news agencies like TASS, the radio networks like Radio Moscow and Radio Beijing were there to gather information for the decision-makers, and used by them to disseminate any information which they thought would promote communism. These communication networks were also used to propagate communist ideologies and counter the propaganda of the Western capitalist countries. Thus, during the ‘cold war’ period, ‘information’ and ‘disinformation’ had become synonymous in the light of the activities of these two giant polarised camps.

The communist countries used their information campaigns to have an effective hold on their own population as well as to influence the newly independent countries of the Third World. Actually, the whole period of cold war could be termed as the era of ‘information war’. To win this war, both the West as well as the socialist countries invested a lot of money to develop their information propagating instruments. The latest developments in the satellite technology were a result of this race to win the information war.

The dramatic collapse of the East European countries, and the disintegration of the ‘Soviet Union’ in 1989-91, brought an end to this ever-increasing tension of the undeclared information war. But, then, one can only look back and say that it helped communication technology, and the process of the dissemination of information leap-frogged decades as never before.

Check Your Progress 4

Notes: i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

1) How did the ‘cold war’ help the communication technology to develop?

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2.3.3 The Third World

After World War II, there was a dramatic change in the political composition of nations. Most of the colonised countries became independent, some through violent means, the rest peacefully. The First and Second Worlds were waging an undeclared war, and the newly independent countries were caught in between. The Third World had no proper infrastructure, no industry, no food, no medicine and, above all, no capital but a huge population to feed, clothe and provide shelter for. Disease, hunger, and death were their only companions.

The leaders of these newly independent countries had very bitter experiences of exploitation by the colonial powers. They were aware of the danger of going back to these imperialist powers for aid to feed their people, to build infrastructure, to set up industries, etc. On the other hand they were suspicious about the communist countries. Thus, the newly independent countries were in a precarious situation. They had to ask for aid from their former colonial masters, on their terms and conditions, or play into the hands of socialists and communist countries. Faced with this choice a few countries succumbed to the temptation and joined one or the other group. Regional and international alliances, like SEATO, NATO, WARSAW PACT, and COMECON, came into being.

However, a few of the Third World countries decided to form their own group called the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). India, along with Egypt, Yugoslavia (formerly) and Ghana, played a very important role in this movement. The NAM countries, while remaining neutral between the two camps, could gain from both for their economic development.

Sincere efforts were made by many NAM countries to develop their information networks. India stands out in this endeavour. It had the Press Trust of India (PTI) and United News of India (UNI) — two major national news agencies. Not many countries were as fortunate. Their political instability, corruption, economic backwardness, ethnic conflicts, religious wars, foreign debt servicing, etc., hindered growth in the field of information and communication.

Let us first understand what is the position of the media development in the Third World countries of Africa, Middle East, Asia, and Latin America.

Africa: It consists of 51 independent countries with a population of more than 400 million. There are 800 languages or dialects. David Lamb, the Los Angeles Times correspondent in Africa in the late 1970s, reported that the question of newspapers in Africa was whether they would survive at all. Six black African countries had no newspaper at all. The UNESCO’s minimum criterion for what it regarded as an ‘adequate’ communication system was 100 copies per 1,000 people. Africa in the 1980s, at barely one-tenth of that minimum, remained the most newspaper-poor part of the Third World. (Robert Stevenson, 1988, p. 108)

Middle East: The massive oil reserves of the 15 Middle East countries brought in unprecedented economic development there. "Despite the rapid infusion of petro-dollars into the Middle East, the area as a whole showed less than spectacular newspaper growth in the 1970s... The number of daily newspapers increased from 489, in 1965, to 607, in 1977. Circulation increased from 4.5 to 4.8 million, but the average circulation per thousand persons dropped from 45 copies to 37. These estimates put the Middle East slightly ahead of Africa in newspaper availability, but not by much", (Robert Stevenson, 1988, P.110). But according to the BBC, the broadcasting scenario has improved more than five folds. The TV sets per thousand population increased from 6, in 1965, to 894, in 1984.

Asia: Asia is very large, both in terms of the land mass and population. Language, culture, ethnicity, and religious practices are as varied as the nations themselves. India, China, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore as well as many other countries show widespread disparities in the media availability. Some are quite adequate, such as Japan, and a few, like Bangladesh, Nepal, and Vietnam, are media-poor.

Latin America: The circulation of newspapers in Latin America declined from 70 copies per 100 people, in 1970, to 56 copies, in 1980. However, the spread of the radio and TV sets showed a remarkable improvement. In 1984, Latin America had 343 radio sets per 100 people, while the TV sets grew from 29 per 1000 people to 134 per 1000 people, in 1984.
2.4 CONCEPT OF FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION

"The free flow of information" is a Western concept, by which almost all Western countries rationalise the operations of their media and information agencies, both in their own countries and abroad. The term means that any person or persons and/or any organisation or organisations can own and operate any media or information agency, gather any information, and disseminate the same, if they so desire, to any target audience, wherever and whenever they want. Further, the ownership of the media or information agencies should be restricted to a certain category, the gathering of the news, facts and information, and their dissemination should be unhindered. The concept is basic to the history, culture and life of the liberal capitalist Western society. Any challenge to this concept is rejected on grounds that it is undemocratic, inhuman, and even uncivilized.

The philosophy of free flow resulted in the consolidation of the centres of information gathering and dissemination in the Western countries. The Socialist and the Third World countries could see that they were not being represented objectively in the Western media. Significant happenings in their countries were paid scant attention, and whenever done, those were only half truths coloured by the Western perceptions. Thus, a very awkward situation developed in the world due to the concept of the 'free flow' and operations of the international networks in the Third World countries. Slowly, this situation got concretised, and the leaders of the Third World countries endured the situation as they were unable to take steps to change the situation. The Third World countries had no infrastructure or active network to make a difference.

2.4.1 Concept of Imbalance

From the above, it is very clear that there is an imbalance in the flow of information between the developed West and the developing Third World countries, which cannot have any say on the mechanism of gathering information as they do not own and control the technology of the giant information agencies of the West. Moreover, the Third World countries, knowing...
fully well that the information disseminated from these agencies does not represent all the truths about them, consume them, as they do not have any other sources. This imbalance is, in terms of volume of information, flowing into the Third World countries, when compared to the volume of information flowing out from them. There is imbalance also in terms of ownership and control, in terms of areas and items covered by these agencies.

The Third World countries argue that their struggle to make the living conditions better for the teeming millions go unnoticed by these transnational news agencies. They are mostly misreported, and never appreciated, whereas the shortcomings, weaknesses, and failures get prominence in the Western media. They argue, that volumes of information about the merit, comfort, and goodness of their lifestyle, their produce and irrelevant items are fed to them through the Western media channels. Therefore, an information imbalance, biased against the Third World, and tilted towards the West, exists today.

2.4.2 Origin of the Concept of Imbalance

The root of the problem goes back to the late 1950s and 1960s, when the concept of 'Development Communication' was born. You have known about 'Development Communication' in this course in Block 2, Unit 2. The communication specialists thought that when the socio-economic development projects were aided by communication inputs, such as the radio and television programmes, the undeveloped and traditional societies could speedily transformed into the developed, dynamic, and modern societies. They thought that what the West achieved in centuries, the Third World could achieve the same in a matter of decades if aided by the mass media. Two eminent Western scholars were in the forefront to suggest this theory. Daniel Lerner in his famous book The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East, described that a small isolated village called Balgat in Turkey was changing as it came in contact with Ankara. And, he elaborated on how this small village could be transformed through the help of the mass media, particularly the radio. It could increase the rate of literacy, promote good health, and create new aspirations for the people to work for higher earnings. So also Wilbur Schramm, in 1964, wrote Mass Media and National Development for the UNESCO, in which he described two families, one in Central Africa, the Ife family and another in South Asia, the Bvani family. He described the development and growth of the Bvani family and how their aspirations could be raised through the mass media, especially the radio.

Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm were accepted as prophets of the New Age. Their theories were tried and implemented vigorously in many Third World countries.

Development during this time meant creation of a stable and sustainable democratic nation, and replacing the authoritarian regimes with democratic governments, and implementing projects and programmes to uplift the living conditions of the common man in society. It was assumed that the mass media, used for these purposes, would transform the developing societies into modern, vibrant, and stable societies.

However, a decade later, it was found that despite all these efforts, most of the social problems remained unsolved. Instead, more problems were created as a result of the rising aspirations and expectations of the millions. Thus, political instability, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and corruption became the salient features of a developing society. These negative developments were heavily focused by the Western media organizations. Some other experts and scholars pointed out that the focus of the development communication was very limited. It focused on persons without taking the social, political and economic situations into consideration. And thus, development communication did not bring about the expected results. On the contrary, it created more problems than solutions.

In such a situation, an American author, Herbert Schiller articulated something very new. He argued that the 'American Information Empire', through Multinational Corporations (MNC) and Transnational Corporations (TNC), were serving the American economy. The old colonialism remained intact, but was operating with more refined instruments. Thus colonial centres remained as they were earlier — the outflow of capital also was in the same direction as before. The demands for the economical and cultural produce were created, in the periphery, through the forces of MNCs and TNCs. Herbert Schiller wrote:
"Unavailable to expansionists of earlier times, modern mass communications perform a double service for their present-day controllers... abroad, the antagonism to a renewed though perhaps less apparent colonial servitude, has been quite successfully (to date) deflected and confused by the images and messages which originate in the United States but which flow continuously over and through local international media... expanding across all continents, the sphere (of American investment and trade) grows significantly larger year by year. A powerful communication system exists to secure, not grudging submission by an open-armed allegiance in the penetrated areas, but by identifying the American presence with freedom — freedom of trade, freedom of speech and freedom of enterprise" (Herbert Schiller, 1971, pp. 2-3).

So, we can see, from Schiller's statement, that free flow of information was essentially meant to safeguard the economical growth of the West. And any attempt to regulate the flow of information beyond borders is seen as a threat to the Western economies. Thus, it is termed as interference with the basic human right. Hence, the concept of 'imbalance' is an economic issue, and the international flow of information is just another fact of this issue.

Check Your Progress 6
Notes : i) Use the space below for your answers.
   ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you mean by 'imbalance' in the flow of information and communication between the West and the developing countries?

2) Why is 'imbalance' an economic issue?

2.4.3 The Imbalance Debate

Together with Herbert Schiller, there were quite a few who took up the issue of the international news flow in various international fora. Schiller's early work spoke about the Dependency Model, a Marxist approach to analyse the international information flow and the state of imbalance emanating from it. His dependency theories stated that the imperial powers of the West would like to have economic centres in their own country, and control all the economic activities in the periphery through the modern instruments of mass communication.

Mustapha Masmoudi, Secretary of Information of Tunisia, and later on its ambassador to the United Nations, attacked the West with such venom and strength that his counterparts of the West were baffled and puzzled. He argued in various international fora on the following lines:

- The Western countries had monopolised the flow of the international information. They decided on what views items/information must be consumed by the people of the developing countries.
Through these international information networks, the West had retained their hegemonic power over the Third World. Even after decades of independence, they still dominate and rule over (indirectly) the Third World countries.

The information set up in the international arena reflects a very strong political, economic and cultural colonialism opposed to the aspirations of the people of the developing countries.

The mass media have replaced the armies of the colonial powers in this era.

There were other arguments. Chaudhury Inayatullah, a Pakistani Development Official, said at the East-West Center, Hawaii, that the leaders of the Third World countries could not make the West responsible so long as they copied the western model of development. He also accused the leaders of not finding a genuine definition and model of development for the Third World.

Check Your Progress 7

Notes:  
   i) Use space below for your answers.
   ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) What were the points of Mustapha Masmoudi with which he attacked the operations of the West in the Third World countries?

2) What was Chaudhury Inayatullah's argument?

The outcome of these arguments was to have a New World Economic and Information Order (NWEIO). This shall be dealt with elaborately in the next unit. Now, the points of the NWEIO, voiced by its representatives, were the following:

- The West must transfer wealth to the Third World to set up suitable information centres.
- There should be a balance in the flow of information from the Third World to the First World.
- The advanced technology should be transferred to the developing states from the west.
- Development News should be promoted, and it should include everything from literacy and health to agricultural practices, from family planning to environment.
- Political News, such as Protocol News, should be given prominence. These news items would depict pictures of good harmonious relations among nations.
- The communication networks among the Third World countries should be developed.
Activity 1

Take any daily newspaper, and list:

a) the headlines of the news items,
b) the geographical origin of the news items (city, town, villages etc., and
c) the sources of each news item (PTI, UNI, AP, AFP, own staff/correspondent).

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Item</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uproar in Rajya Sabha</td>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>PTI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After you have listed all the headlines or the news items with their corresponding origin and source, place them according to different categories (political, economic, social, cultural, and sports). Count the origin of the news items, and identify the source in each of the five categories. Calculate the percentages.

From this exercise, you will have a fair idea of the character of the newspaper in terms of the news categories it concentrates on, and the origin and sources it uses to give the day’s news.

2.5 NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE ON ECONOMY, AID, TRADE AND INFORMATION

Before we talk about the North-South dialogue, we need to touch upon the South-South dialogue and cooperation. In many international forums, especially in the UNESCO, the leaders of the Third World countries criticise the West. Their rhetorics on ‘imperialism’, ‘neo-colonialism’, and ‘cultural domination’ will not bear fruit unless they cooperate and help each other to achieve economic growth. Non-aligned countries speak about disengagement from the oppressive global system of the West and creating a new one for themselves. They speak about interdependence and cooperation among the Third World nations. But, all these efforts have remained only words till now. There is enough evidence to prove that, instead, there is greater dependence on the two cold war super powers that were the USA and the USSR. After the break up of the latter, only the former is left on the world scene.

However, the search for alternative models for development is on particularly in the sphere of economy, trade, culture and information. In 1973, at Algiers, the Non-aligned countries focused their attention on the alternate paths of news flow. This was a major action against the dominance of the Western information news agencies. Subsequent NAM conferences, after long deliberations, decided to pool their resources together to form the Non-aligned
The United Nations, through the UNESCO, has demonstrated great support to the demands of the Third World countries, especially in the area of information and communication.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has also shown a certain amount of flexibility towards the commitment of the UNESCO, and was concretised in the formation of the Inter-governmental Programme for Development of Communication (IPDC). This was established to provide all kinds of assistance to the Third World countries to improve their information and communication networks. But, the West retaliated by refusing to contribute to the IPDC fund, fearing that the IPDC might be used to strengthen the governments hold on the media infrastructure in the Third World countries. The IPDC’s general conferences approved 100 million dollars for IPDC, but only 5 million dollars were pledged, with the USA contributing not even a single dollar. However, the US government allowed massive funding for the Agency for International Development (AID) for the use of communication facilities in the Third World countries, realizing that only then would they be able to control operations in these poor countries. In international diplomacy, trade and economy, there is no charity. The West, till today has not and will not offer advanced communication technology or modern information instruments, or allocate and transfer resources on a silver platter. Issues of any kind will be linked to the business, trade and economical advantages for the West. The so called NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) and other international institutions pretend to act as neutral mediators, but they too depend on the West for funds and resources. Thus, the whole situation is unbalanced, heavily tilted towards the West and highly discriminatory to the developing world. Despite the recent developments in the developed West and the emerging democracies of East Europe, the consolidation of the European community and rejuvenation of Germany and Japan, there is no break through for easing of the problems of the developing countries.

2.6 CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

With the end of the cold war between the Soviet Union and the United States of America, there seems to be a new, more relaxed and more cooperative environment prevailing in the world politics. But this situation is very deceptive. Developments in the US, on the domestic front, and their balance of payment position, and, in Russia, on the political and economic front, have dampened the dominant outlook presented at the beginning of the current decade. The fight to influence the developing countries has ended. Most of the communist countries are now desperately trying to get aid and cooperation possible for restructuring their own countries.

In India, the new economic policy has been formulated, and is being implemented now. The economy is opening up for the participation of the foreign companies. But this is not shaping up as planned, and already there are misgivings, internally, and fears expressed about the stability of the country by the foreign investors. Ironically, in such a fluid situation, the experts from both the West and Third World countries, like India, are discussing such issues — like environment protection, AIDS, NPT, etc., to salvage mankind from being wiped off from the face of the earth. This contradiction needs to be resolved before any meaningful effort could be made to reverse the trend in the Third World.

All these issues are reflected in the television and radio programmes. Satellite communication has wired the whole earth. People sitting in any town in any country can hook their TV sets to the satellite and watch programmes of their choice. Due to the speed with which things are happening, decades or even centuries could be compressed in a few years time.
In the Third World, there is a sharp decline in autocratic and dictatorial rules. The military-led regimes in South American, African and Asian countries have gone back to the barracks. The popular governments are taking over the reins of running their countries. There is a marked visibility of people at the grassroots level participating in government. What we are witnessing is a phase of maturity in the former colonies of the imperialist powers.

The media of the Third World does realise this change in the national and international political and economical spheres. Exchanges of the TV programmes, specially educational programmes, are quite frequent, though the flow is still imbalanced, because more western programmes are seen on the TV screens of the Third World countries. In the recently concluded International Film Festival in New Delhi, the quality of the movies from the West left much to be desired. This revealed the status the West still gives to such an important country like India.

Thus, despite the large-scale changes brought about by technology, imbalance persists in the media and coverage of the developed West vis-a-vis the developing countries of the Third World.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the theory of International Information Flow and the imbalance created in the world as a consequence. We have seen how the outflow of capital from the Third World countries has created huge reservoirs of 'wealth' in the West. The power emanating from such wealth has created gigantic networks of information and communication to promote economic interests of the West in the Third World countries.

This situation created a tremendous amount of imbalance in the information flow from and to the Third World countries. The leaders of the Third World countries took up this issue of imbalance at various international forums to debate and argue with a desire to bringing about a semblance of balance in the international flow of information. Before such a balance could be brought about, the Third World countries should bring about a balance in their own regions through cooperation.

The collapse and disintegration of the communist and socialist countries has not made international relations conducive for a dialogue. However, the tension that existed during the cold war has been reduced considerably. A new era in the international communication has to be set in motion to correct the imbalance that persists in information flows between the west and the Third World.

2.8 GLOSSARY

You must have come across many terms and concepts in this unit. A short explanation about some of the terms and concepts is provided here for your easy understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First World</td>
<td>Countries which are industrialised and are the former colonial powers. These countries are mostly situated in Europe and North America.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second World</td>
<td>Countries which have adopted communism or socialism as their guiding force to run the affairs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third World Developing Countries</td>
<td>These countries are mostly situated in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They were the colonies, and are economically very poor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under-developed Countries</td>
<td>A group of more than one hundred nations belonging to the Third World countries.</td>
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<td>Non-aligned Movement</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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2.9 FURTHER READING


2.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) When human mind interacts with information, 'knowledge' is produced. Knowledge can be stored and used as and when required. Take the example of sugar manufacturing. This knowledge can be used in a factory to manufacture tons and tons of sugar. This sugar can be sold and money can be earned. And money brings power.

Check Your Progress 2

1) In the last few centuries, the European explorers left their shores to know other countries existing in other parts of the world. The sailors of these countries gathered plenty of information regarding the customs, culture, religions, geographical conditions, etc. of the other people. This information was processed and converted into knowledge. Some of the knowledge could be the quality and quantity of the minerals found in a country, the physical and psychological make up of the citizen of a country, etc. This information and knowledge were then used as and when required to gain economical and political benefits. These benefits brought the West wealth and unlimited power.

2) The underdeveloped countries do not have the giant infrastructure that the West has. They do not have enough capital to invest for developing the infrastructure required for the operation of gathering and disseminating information. The underdeveloped countries have other very urgent problems to address. These problems are poverty, illiteracy, health, etc.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Historically, the colonial powers of the West have already experienced the advantages of being information rich. While establishing the colonies, they used information to accumulate wealth and gain political powers, which provided the colonial countries with enough capital. They invested that capital in the business of information. Therefore, a continuous investment in the information business helped the West to become rich as far as information gathering, using and disseminating were concerned.
Check Your Progress 4

1) After the Second World War, the world was divided into two camps: one belonging to the USA, the other to the Soviet Union. Both the camps tried to influence the other groups through propaganda. For this, they had used the latest technologies, invested in research, and improved the network. Thus, each camp employed all the available and possible resources to outbeat each other in the most fearsome competition of the cold era.

Check Your Progress 5

1) There are various reasons for the Third World countries not having a developed communication system. The following are some of the reasons:

   a) Due to unprecedented exploitation by the colonial power, the Third World could not amass any capital to build a required infrastructure to develop communication systems.

   b) When these countries got independence, they had many urgent and serious problems at their hands, such as poverty, illiteracy, health, etc.

   c) The leaders of the Third World countries never paid attention to communication. They never thought it to be important.

   d) The Third World countries did not have enough trained people in communication.

   e) Even to this day, the communication systems are not given any priority.

Check Your Progress 6

1) The communication networks of the West gather a huge amount of information from all the four corners of the world. After processing they feed almost all the newspapers, radio stations, TV stations, media institutions etc. with the information. These news agencies transmit only those news items, which they think are ‘newsworthy’. News about the developing countries is heavily coloured by the Western correspondents, and they report only the ‘spot items’ of natural calamities, death, poverty, hunger, disease, etc. The Third World countries do not have any say in the selection of the news items for transmission. Moreover, good news items of the developing countries seldom find a place in the newspapers of the West. This is imbalance.

2) The Western communication networks function in such a way that they are geared only to safeguard the economical interest of the West. These networks create a milieu, an environment in the Third World countries for the population to accept the produce of the West, their points of view, etc. quite easily.

Check Your Progress 7

1) The Western Communication networks have created an imbalance on the flow of communication. They decide which news items should be printed, and in which paper.

   a) These networks dominate over the thinking of most of the Third World countries.

   b) They are dominating the cultural sphere and, hence, the indigenous local cultures were being eroded.

   c) They help the economic interests to make deep inroads in the Third World countries.

   d) The mass media are the new army of the West.

2) Mr. Chaudhry Inayatullah argued that the leaders of the Third World countries are to be blamed for the sorry situation of their countries. They have failed, collectively, to evolve an appropriate strategy for development.