MEDIA IMPERIALISM

Redefining the Field

MEDIA IMPERIALISM

What does it mean to talk of "media imperialism?" The expression implies that certain forms of imperialism are directly related with the media in some way. At least three forms of relationship are implicated. Firstly, processes of imperialism are in various senses executed, promoted, transformed or undermined and resisted by and through media. Secondly, the media themselves, the meanings they produce and distribute and the political-economic processes that sustain them are sculpted by and through ongoing processes of empire building and maintenance, and they carry the residues of empires that once were. Thirdly, there are media behaviors that in and of themselves and without reference to broader or more encompassing frameworks may be considered imperialistic. These may be international (as in the unequal news exchange relationships imposed by western international news agencies on national agencies throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) or national (as in the case of powerful entertainment and news media that exercise inordinate commercial and political influence in given national markets – the influence of Rupert Murdoch in the United Kingdom comes to mind). In the literature on media imperialism, all these inflections and others are to be found. Sometimes the term is ascribed a theoretical status, as one or more theories within a much broader range of existing theories about international communication. The literature that specifically addresses media imperialism represents a relatively small body of work when compared with broader literatures that, while they are relevant in important ways to the topic of media imperialism, do not invoke the term itself.

In this book I propose as a starting point that the term "media imperialism" designates, first and foremost, an area of study, an area that deals with the range of relationships and interconnections between phenomena that scholars
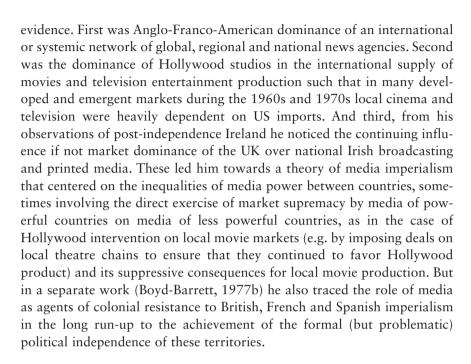
label "imperialism" and those that they label "media," an area that is available for empirical investigation. Within this area of study, previous and surely future scholarship proposes research questions or hypotheses that manifest characteristics of "theory" in social science. For example, drawing on primary or secondary data, or both, they may hypothesize that the interactions of two or more phenomena, dimensions, factors or variables that connect imperialism and media demonstrate consistency over time or place, yielding predictive value. While any such finding might be thought of as contributing, whether in endorsement or refutation, to a theory of media imperialism, I prefer to avoid the presumption that within the empirical field of media imperialism study there should be only one theory as opposed to an open-ended range or chain of such theories.

Within the field of media imperialism study one may identify quite different theories about the nature of this relationship. This is not the place for a substantive or exhaustive exegesis, but for the purposes of illustration and introduction we can identify four separate theories that were current from the 1940s to the 1970s. Harold Innis (2007 [1950]) identified what he believed were distinctive relationships between the physical properties of communication systems (e.g. stone, papyrus or paper) and the structures and capabilities of power in ancient civilizations. Herbert Schiller (1992 [1969]) called attention to what he considered to be an intensifying dependence of media political economy on new, transnational methods of electronic communication (notably the satellite). These embedded the media ever more closely within a regulatory system that served the US military industrial complex, first and foremost, while wedding them to business models that coincidentally also facilitated the global extension of US economic and political power. Extension of US power occurred as a result both of the direct sale of US commodities through advertising and, less directly, of the demonstration – through entertainment – of enviable consumerist modernity. Together, these forces helped shape popular consciousness by means of a hegemonic, ideological frame that was at least consonant with the role of the USA as superpower. Like Schiller, Jeremy Tunstall (1977) was also intrigued by the role of media in sustaining and extending US power but thought of this largely in terms of comparative market advantages. The USA was a large and prosperous media market. By recovering the costs of production at home US media could easily compete with local communication products in what were generally much smaller overseas markets: they could afford to tailor their prices in any way necessary to ensure market dominance, except where local regulations restricted foreign imports. Oliver Boyd-Barrett (1977a) extrapolated from three media phenomena of the 1970s, each supported by ample empirical

evidence. First was Anglo-Franco-American dominance of an international or systemic network of global, regional and national news agencies. Second was the dominance of Hollywood studios in the international supply of movies and television entertainment production such that in many developed and emergent markets during the 1960s and 1970s local cinema and television were heavily dependent on US imports. And third, from his observations of post-independence Ireland he noticed the continuing influence if not market dominance of the UK over national Irish broadcasting and printed media. These led him towards a theory of media imperialism that centered on the inequalities of media power between countries, sometimes involving the direct exercise of market supremacy by media of powerful countries on media of less powerful countries, as in the case of Hollywood intervention on local movie markets (e.g. by imposing deals on local theatre chains to ensure that they continued to favor Hollywood product) and its suppressive consequences for local movie production. But in a separate work (Boyd-Barrett, 1977b) he also traced the role of media as agents of colonial resistance to British, French and Spanish imperialism in the long run-up to the achievement of the formal (but problematic) political independence of these territories.

MEDIA

I will not assume that the principal terms of my subject are everywhere comprehended in the same way, so some discussion of basic terms is in order. Let me start with the somewhat plainer term "media." While this term also has significations that lie outside of the study of technology-mediated communications it is with this arena that we are principally concerned. Several generations of research lend confidence to the observation that in this field it has generally been understood that the term was intended to refer to technology-enabled means of communication from the few to the many. These included books, newspapers, recorded music, film, radio and television. More recently, it has become universally appreciated that to this classic list of media should be added computer or digitally-enabled Internet and the World Wide Web. These fuse traditional few-to-many media with the one-to-one communication capabilities of telephony or radiophony and introduce facilities or forms of communication that did not previously exist (e.g. Internet browsers and portals, search engines, social network media) and are carriers of digital versions of all previous media forms. Particularly through the development of social network media, the Internet has considerably extended and enriched the scope for all kinds of communications among groups and networks, from very small to very large.
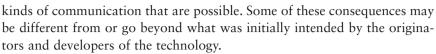
I see no particular merit, therefore, in limiting the discussion only to the so-called classic mass media or mass communication. A principal characteristic of mass communication is that communication content is formulated by the few for delivery to the many. A characteristic of both mass communication and technology-enabled interpersonal communication is that governance and operation of the technological, administrative and business infrastructures that give shape to and set the conditions for both these forms of communication are controlled by the few, with limited active involvement, if any, by the many.

Previous media scholarship centered predominantly on content – the production of content and the consumption or use of content by audiences, receivers or even interpretive communities. I propose in this book that in addition to an interest in point-of-consumption content (seen in previous research in terms of either the decoding of messages or collaborative meaning-making) we must also be concerned with the technological, administrative and business infrastructures that enable the production and dissemination of point-of-consumption content, including the range of devices through which that content is produced, delivered and received (hardware) and the protocols and operating systems they incorporate ("software"). Naturally, the relationship between software and hardware is symbiotic: hardware shapes and gives tone and texture to software, while software inspires the design of hardware. The onset of digital communication, which enables the delivery of a vast range of communication activity and content through the same device or range of devices, has highlighted the increasing significance of media concentration, the process whereby single media corporations acquire interests across all major forms of communication in processes of vertical and horizontal integration and extra-media conglomeration. Digital technology and the infrastructures that enable it (including cable, satellite and wireless networks) massively enhance communications activity across local, national, regional, international and even global markets, and compel us to understand the term "media" as encompassing all technology-enabled forms of communication, irrespective of time or space.

In approaching media with an outlook that emphasizes the importance of technology I shall try to avoid the attendant seductions of technological determinacy – the fallacy of attributing to technology some of the consequences of media that should more appropriately be attributed to the people, interests and social formations that gave rise to the technology. Certainly, once formulated, a technology may have highly significant consequences for determining who gets access to the means of communication for the creation, dissemination or reception of communications and the

kinds of communication that are possible. Some of these consequences may be different from or go beyond what was initially intended by the originators and developers of the technology.

I cannot do justice in one volume to all the relevant issues of media and technology that relate to broader concerns of imperialism and resistance to it. Issues that deserve further treatment, but for reasons of space I have not developed, include but are not limited to those of Internet governance and the Internet Governance Forum, intellectual property legislation and issues of "piracy," the politics and weaponization of "surveillance," and the significance of the World Summit on the Information Society meetings of 2003 and 2005.

If I limited the discussion only to technology-enhanced communication, however, I would not do justice to the importance of more fundamental aspects of communication. These have to do with the always context-suffused processes of the generating, sharing, storing and retrieving of meaning, with or without the aid of technologies that go beyond the human body. This includes, of course, all aspects of human language, verbal and non-verbal, upon which almost the entirety of all media processes are dependent and which are every bit as accessible to discourses about imperialism as are the media. More broadly one can say that this realm of consideration invokes and is inseparable from an appreciation of culture(s) understood in the Raymond Williams' sense as way(s) of being (Williams, 1958). There is nothing about media that we can or should say that is not in some way or another embedded in a broader and deeper context of culture.

IMPERIALISM

While the term "media" must assuredly have a range of normative and other associations for any who would use it, it is a concept that readily lends itself to a working separation, in the hands of scholars, of its sense of media-as-empirical-tool from normative precepts or prescriptions as to how those tools should be used. This is less true, by an order of magnitude, of this volume's second key term, "imperialism," which presents itself with an even heavier weight of historical and ideological baggage. I surmise that the term is more often used with negative than with positive connotation, although certainly there are some who regard at least certain manifestations of imperialism as being benign or having long-term benign effects (a view that is likely more common among agents of imperialism, the imperialists, than those they colonize).

This problem notwithstanding, I choose to retain the term with all of its baggage and imprecisions. First of all, it usefully invokes the idea of power
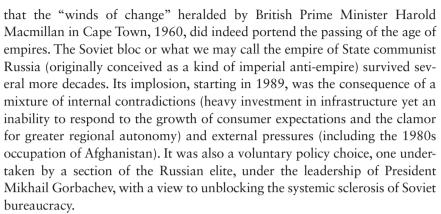
and unequal relations of power, particularly in the context of power exercised by some tribes, communities, and nations over others. Secondly, it is a term that in the study of media has now acquired a heritage of at least half a century's thinking, research and debate. Thirdly, it is incontestably the case that virtually all scholarship recognizes the phenomenon of "empire" as a long-established historical and institutional reality, and the term tends to be least controversially applied in the case of geographically identified centers of power such as Carthage, Crete, Athens or Rome that have extended political and military influence and control over wide swathes of territory for appreciably long periods of time in a process that is invariably accompanied by profound changes in commercial, social and cultural activity. Any inquiry into the role of media, albeit in the form of stone, papyrus or paper in relation, say, to the supply of armies, records of administration and trade, propagation of imperial edicts, ideology and religion, not unreasonably may be considered aspects of media imperialism (Thussu [2006] cites several such examples from antiquity in his textbook on international communication).

Western scholarship has had no difficulty in recognizing the existence of ancient empires whether in the west or in the east; nor has it scrupled in recognizing as empires the far-flung territories acquired, for various periods of time within the last few hundred years up to and beyond the Second World War, by ruling elites of countries as diverse as Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Ottoman Turkey. European land-acquisition extended to the far Atlantic coast, igniting a process that led to the formation of the USA – which quickly joined the imperial club – and to vast regions of the Gulf, Africa, Asia and South America. The relinquishing of colonies (in Africa, the Middle East, Pacific and Far East) by Britain (in particular), Belgium, France and Portugal within the two decades following the Second World War – even if in most cases the imperialist's apparent departure was hastened by highly motivated local movements of independence or liberation – has created considerable confusion in many minds, scholars' included. Whether the motives for "giving up" colonies were idealistic (in altruistic celebration of the principle of national self-determination), diplomatic (e.g. comprising part of the settlement of "peace" terms by the victorious powers at Yalta towards the end of the Second World War in 1945), propagandistic (presented as representative of western liberal "civilization" and intended to stand in stark contrast to communist or fascist "totalitarianism" and barbarism) or in other ways self-interested (as in: dispensing with the pain, costs and other "burdens" of empire in the face of liberation movements and/or in order to better sustain political and capitalist "stability" at home), it seemed indisputable at the time

that the "winds of change" heralded by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in Cape Town, 1960, did indeed portend the passing of the age of empires. The Soviet bloc or what we may call the empire of State communist Russia (originally conceived as a kind of imperial anti-empire) survived several more decades. Its implosion, starting in 1989, was the consequence of a mixture of internal contradictions (heavy investment in infrastructure yet an inability to respond to the growth of consumer expectations and the clamor for greater regional autonomy) and external pressures (including the 1980s occupation of Afghanistan). It was also a voluntary policy choice, one undertaken by a section of the Russian elite, under the leadership of President Mikhail Gorbachev, with a view to unblocking the systemic sclerosis of Soviet bureaucracy.

Throughout the Cold War (but also, long before and persisting long after the Cold War) there were many superpower and particularly US interventions (my interest is primarily in the USA in this book) in the supposedly sovereign affairs of other nations and territories that did not involve their territorial incorporation within the formal political apparatus of the hegemon. I shall argue that these kinds of intervention are best understood as a continuation of classic imperialism in relatively new (but also some quite old) forms. Their goals are not always to do with territorial acquisition; they are to do with securing – by any means possible, including violent coercion, provocation, bribery, threat, subterfuge – the foreign policy goals of the USA and of those parties or interests that have had most access to the shaping of these goals. The latter often, if not usually, include large multinational corporations based or originated in the USA or among the most powerful allies of the USA. Given the wide discrepancies between the declared motivations that are proffered by governments in justification for intervention (especially in the context of a supposedly "post-imperial" world), and "real" aims (typically representing a consensus of convenience struck between otherwise diverse interests), interventions require significant manipulation of public opinion through control of or influence over the media. Superpower interventions are therefore of critical importance to scholars of media imperialism. Later chapters will trace some of the key forms of imperialist intervention and its justification not only in the period since World War Two but since the emergence of the USA as a world power which is to say, almost from its very birth as a nation in 1776. Frequent objectives at play have included territorial acquisition but even more routinely involve discourses of national security and, behind or through such discourses, consolidation of political leverage in international relations and favorable terms of access to raw materials and to all kinds of markets, from the sale of debt to the provision of arms.
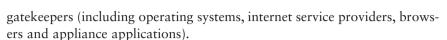
CRITIQUE AND COUNTER-CRITIQUE

While never disappearing from the research literature, the media imperialism tradition fell out of favor among those who criticized it for being either over-simplistic or out of date (e.g. see Straubhaar, 1991). The actual phenomenon of media imperialism, on the other hand, has never disappeared or ceased to be important. I shall propose that this field of study is sustainable, has evolved, and has never been more relevant than in the current, so-called digital age. It is central to considerations of media and power and although questions of power do not by any means exhaust the questions we may have about the media, there is a critical urgency for issues of power to be returned to center place in the field. In outlining reasons for the reinstallation of a concern for media imperialism, I prefer the term "media" to "cultural" imperialism. Although there are clearly many important and dialectical interrelationships between media and culture, I use the idea of "media imperialism" to focus attention on the political economy of the communications industries which is where I propose the analysis of media and power in a global context should begin.

Several critics, and even some who work within the tradition of media imperialism studies, confine their attention mainly or solely to manifest media content. Content tends to be judged by such considerations as whether or to what extent it is locally produced or imported (or the degree to which it is "hybridized") and its generic status, often in the context of fears of cultural homogenization and what that might mean. This may be to the exclusion of other vitally important variables including transnational transfers of media-related capital, ownership, advertising, expertise, technology, formats, patents and royalties. Even at the level of content, analysis is too often unsophisticated, with little work expended on how issues are framed, the ideological premises (with respect, for example, to the neoliberal agenda that has been promoted by the USA and its major allies), sources cited, degrees of consonance with domestic or foreign state policies and corporate interests. Some of the original models of media imperialism (e.g. Schiller, 1992 [1969]; Boyd-Barrett, 1977a) specifically emphasized components that went beyond manifest content. Some more recent work (e.g. McChesney and Schiller, 2003; Boyd-Barrett, 2006) has tried to broaden the field of relevant media in the era of technology convergence, embracing not simply "old" and "new" media, but consumer electronics, telephony and computing. These media are important both in and of themselves and also because, increasingly, electronic access to both "old" and "new" media forms is determined by electronic hardware (including cable, satellite and telephony, wired or cellular wireless operators) and software

gatekeepers (including operating systems, internet service providers, browsers and appliance applications).

Misleadingly, some critics have conflated ideas of media imperialism with the historically specific, still enduring, but inevitably finite phenomenon of US global hegemony (notice of whose death, nonetheless, has been much exaggerated, as I shall argue in Chapter 7, due in part to a relative neglect of the roles of advertising and capital accumulation). Some of the earlier literature (e.g. Boyd-Barrett, 1977a, 1982; Tunstall, 1977) specifically identified different and competing centers of media production, insisting that media imperialism is exercised by media, corporate and political powers of many different nation states, not only the biggest, across different time-periods. More recent literature (e.g. Boyd-Barrett, 1998b) argues that media imperialism should be understood not only as a transnational but also as an intra-national phenomenon. This extension is supported by voluminous evidence of media concentration and conglomeration at local, national, regional and transnational levels, involving as it does the commandeering of available communications space by small numbers of giant, highly commercialized, media conglomerates (e.g. Arsenault and Castells, 2008; Noam, 2009). A good example is *Rede Globo* of Brazil, associated with the Marinho brothers whose family founded the group. Despite some vigorous competition, it controls the country's most prestigious daily newspaper, *O Globo*, as well as three other dailies, accounting for some 40 per cent of daily newspaper sales, and operates 27 magazines, while its broadcast television network, including a separate news channel, is available throughout all of Brazil and accounts for well over half of primetime viewing (and snagging 75 per cent of total expenditure on television advertising), in collaboration with 122 owned or affiliate stations, plus 26 pay channels (Sinclair, 1999). Its domestic television audience declined in the 2000s. Sinclair and Straubhaar (2013) consider that Mexico's Televisa has a stronger history of near monopoly.

Writing his classic *The Media are American* close to 40 years ago, Jeremy Tunstall (1977) modified the thrust of his own argument by drawing attention to the importance of regional centers of media production. When he revisited his argument in 2007 with *The Media were American* it appeared as though the profusion of both national and regional centers of production throughout the world had significantly eclipsed older traces of empire. Features of the so-called Korean Wave that emerged in the 1990s together make a good example among several of precisely the kind of phenomenon that led the older Tunstall to revise his argument: the development of a robust national economy, with strong local media production activity across most of the old and some of the new media forms, together with substantial export activity to other areas of its geopolitical region and beyond.
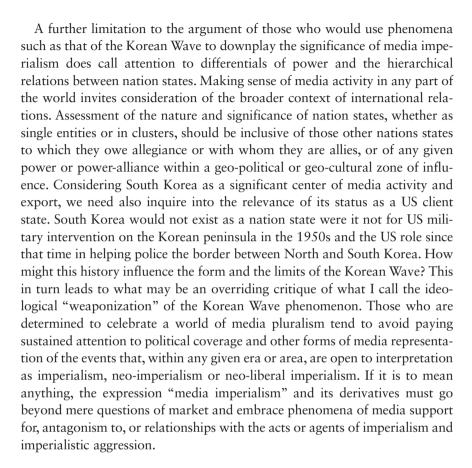
I question the basic premise of those who might leverage the Korean Wave and comparable phenomena as demonstration of the declining significance of media imperialism in the early decades of the twenty-first century. I will examine the Korean Wave in greater depth in Chapter 9. Here I want merely to question the premise that its very existence refutes broader claims as to the very existence of media imperialism. Such a premise, first of all, is ahistorical. It invites us to ascribe particular significance to present trends at the expense of trends in the past even though what has occurred in the past may be fundamental to the present and our understanding of it. Secondly, the argument entertains a narrow conception of media imperialism, focusing principally on the phenomenon of US media imperialism as though other forms of media imperialism whether in the past (stretching back, as we have seen, to ancient civilizations) or present – including, say, that of South Korea itself and the considerable popularity of Korean Wave products in China, throughout East Asia and further afield – are unremarkable. Further, it is narrow because it tends to focus, as did Tunstall's own original approach, on media economics and, in particular, on international trade in media products in preference to aspects of corporate concentration within and control over media markets and the interrelationships of media enterprises with the agendas of political, corporate and other elites, local and global. Among other considerations, Tunstall's emphasis on national media markets would invite the conclusion that so long as a media market is not controlled by foreign media there is no media imperialism. In any nation that exercises imperial control, whether regionally or globally, the usual pattern is for the mainstream media of that country to frame its imperialism as benign or cloak it in a language that negates the possibility of imperialism or aggression. The possibility of imperialism rests just as much or even more on the complicity of media within the imperial center as on media complicity in the countries that are imperialized. Domestic populations often do not favor the aggressive actions of their own governments and need to be educated or misled into accepting elite interests as compatible with their own. Emphasis on national media markets unreasonably ascribes to the nation state the status of being the only building block in the development of media theory. This fails to take into account the always fluid and porous character of national and other forms of territorial boundary, especially when considered in relation to the twin forces of globalization and digitization. Analysis that prioritizes relations between national media markets tends to downplay media imperialism within domestic markets wherever a small number of large media behemoths have captured the available communications space, in all its forms, for the production and supply of information and entertainment products for large audiences.

A further limitation to the argument of those who would use phenomena such as that of the Korean Wave to downplay the significance of media imperialism does call attention to differentials of power and the hierarchical relations between nation states. Making sense of media activity in any part of the world invites consideration of the broader context of international relations. Assessment of the nature and significance of nation states, whether as single entities or in clusters, should be inclusive of those other nations states to which they owe allegiance or with whom they are allies, or of any given power or power-alliance within a geo-political or geo-cultural zone of influence. Considering South Korea as a significant center of media activity and export, we need also inquire into the relevance of its status as a US client state. South Korea would not exist as a nation state were it not for US military intervention on the Korean peninsula in the 1950s and the US role since that time in helping police the border between North and South Korea. How might this history influence the form and the limits of the Korean Wave? This in turn leads to what may be an overriding critique of what I call the ideological "weaponization" of the Korean Wave phenomenon. Those who are determined to celebrate a world of media pluralism tend to avoid paying sustained attention to political coverage and other forms of media representation of the events that, within any given era or area, are open to interpretation as imperialism, neo-imperialism or neo-liberal imperialism. If it is to mean anything, the expression "media imperialism" and its derivatives must go beyond mere questions of market and embrace phenomena of media support for, antagonism to, or relationships with the acts or agents of imperialism and imperialistic aggression.

MEDIA AGENTS *FOR* IMPERIALISM: MEDIA *AS* IMPERIALISTS

The broad field of media studies has not been shy of critical or even radical thinking. In particular, a great deal of attention has been given to the phenomena of media corporatization, conglomeration, consolidation and globalization (e.g. Herman and McChesney, 1998; Croteau and Hoynes, 2005; Mosco, 2009). These phenomena are often deemed highly problematic for the survival of a system of news and entertainment provision that can dependably provide information and perspectives that (1) hold power-holders to account; (2) are inclusive with respect to their representation of both the majority and minority demographic and ethnic divisions common to any society; and (3) provide their publics with information and understanding that enhance their capabilities as citizens and inspire them as human beings (Habermas, 1991). Issues of bigness extend just as much or

even more to telephony, computing and Internet giants such as Apple, China Mobile, Google, Microsoft, or Samsung, and these will be my specific focus in Chapter 8.
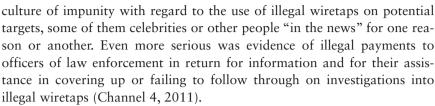
Bigness in itself is not always problematic: a large news media conglomerate may be able to pool its resources to achieve a more comprehensive or more investigative report than, say, a single and independent news outlet. Smallness is not always good either. A newspaper owned by a local, wealthy tycoon may have little interest in providing coverage that is critical of local elites and their economic interests. But the owners and chief executives of big media, which may themselves be components of larger and possibly global conglomerates that own both non-media and media companies, have acquired membership of a corporate elite whose business interests likely override their responsibilities to the "public sphere." Media do not simply cover the political system; they should be seen as constituting a part of it (Cook, 1998). In return for creating access for politicians and executive agencies to address their publics on favorable terms for the purposes of information and propaganda, media owners expect a regulatory environment for communications that does not interfere with their ability to do business. As part of the deal, large mainstream media work with power: I shall argue that this is especially evident in coverage of foreign policy and the military-industrial-security Establishment.

The influence of big media was dramatically exposed in the Newscorp scandals from 2011 onwards. The founding chairman of Newscorp is Rupert Murdoch whose media empire in 2000 already stretched to more than 800 companies in over 50 countries. In the USA, among other media properties, Murdoch owns the *Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones Financial Information Services, *New York Post*, Fox Broadcasting (which includes the Fox News channel), Fox Entertainment (which includes 21st Century Fox) and HarperCollins Publishing. In Britain, his empire (including *The Times*, *The Sun*, and BSkyB) had become so powerful an influence on news agendas through his ownership of substantial shares of print, broadcast and satellite news audiences that he was able to exercise considerable influence over politicians. For over three decades politicians in Britain considered that in order to win elections they had to deal with Murdoch. Part of that deal was to adjust the regulatory environment to his advantage so that he grew even more powerful. An ex-Newscorp editor, Andrew Coulson, was even appointed spokesperson for Prime Minister David Cameron and continued to hold shares in Newscorp. Perhaps even more alarming was the scope that this influence provided Newscorp – in effect, to blackmail politicians or to punish them through negative coverage or the threat of it. This trend was supported by the development in some Murdoch properties of a journalistic

culture of impunity with regard to the use of illegal wiretaps on potential targets, some of them celebrities or other people "in the news" for one reason or another. Even more serious was evidence of illegal payments to officers of law enforcement in return for information and for their assistance in covering up or failing to follow through on investigations into illegal wiretaps (Channel 4, 2011).

Bigness in media tends to be associated with a diminution of competition and usually results from the ambition of owners and executives to earn more money on behalf of themselves and their shareholders. The compulsion to increase profit demonstrably leads in many cases to a diminution of quality, as in the rise of "infotainment" in the news business, and the "dumbing down" of many entertainment genres. Bigness often involves the seizure of a larger market share and the formation of cross-media enterprises whose bid to achieve economies of scale reduces competition within and between market sectors. Bigness has typically involved the raising of large sums of money either from the stock market or from financiers for the purpose of expanding operations and buying out other companies: either way, either large public corporations or private financial institutions end up on the boards of big companies. Their presence has two important consequences for this discussion. They increase the pressure for short-term returns, often at the expense of longer-term quality or sustainability. Financial institutions, whose business is to advance money and earn interest, are motivated to lend more money and to encourage their client companies towards further mergers and acquisitions. In the process the financiers acquire more influence over the companies they support and the decisions these companies make. This also reduces the incentive for news media to provide critical coverage of the financial sector (Almiron, 2010).

The world's largest media groups can boast a substantial global imprint in terms of turnover, profits and audiences or clients. The top-tier companies tend to be concentrated in the wealthiest economies of the world, particularly those of the USA, Japan and the UK. Some especially powerful groups have appeared in emerging economies, notably Samsung in South Korea and Huawei, Alibaba and CCTV in China. Generally speaking the largest of the media groups outside of the USA, Japan and the UK tend to belong to the "second tier" of global companies and there are numerous networking alliances, joint ventures and other connections between first- and second-tier companies. One list, which appears to have excluded telephone networks such as AT&T and Verizon, includes among the top-tier Time Warner, Disney, NewsCorp, Bertelsman, Comast-NBC Universal, CBS & Viacom, Microsoft, Google, Yahoo! and Apple (Arsenault and Castells, 2008).

Some if not all large media conglomerates may be regarded as agents of imperialism where they exercise business practices in ways that suppress the viability of media in countries other than their own, or suppress the viability of smaller media in their own countries of origin so that the diversity and inclusiveness of creative voices and expression in the media are diminished or that access to those voices is reduced. A strong indication of this form of media imperialism is the presence of an oligopoly of media businesses (typically three or four) controlling a substantial share, usually 50% or more, of any given media market between them and whose business activities are closely intertwined with those of second- or third-tier players in the market.

In this book, however, greater attention is given to the role of media not as agents of imperialism on their own behalf but as agents *for* imperialism, whether that takes the form of classic territorial imperialism, "free trade" or "neoliberal" imperialism, and whose hallmarks are coercive interventions in the affairs of sovereign nations, usually with the purpose to secure territory, political leverage, raw materials, trading advantages and markets. Media become agents for imperialism when they frame their narratives in a manner that presents imperialistic activity in a positive or benign light, when they prioritize the voices, justifications and discourses of imperial actors over the voices of victims, dissidents and alternatives, and when they omit or marginalize details and perspectives that would serve to critique imperial power.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have proposed that there are many different kinds of relationship between forms of communication and forms of empire, and that the vectored forces between media and empire are bidirectional. The term "media imperialism," therefore, should not be thought of as a single theory but as a field of study which incorporates different theories about the relationships between media and empire, as well as theories that address the exercise of forms of imperial power by media institutions themselves. By way of illustration of this point, I have identified four among many such theories, each one distinctive: those of Innis, Schiller, Tunstall and Boyd-Barrett. I note that the term "media imperialism" had fallen increasingly out of favor after the 1970s, but many of the criticisms of the term were not well substantiated. While many other terms have subsequently come into vogue, some of them addressing similar themes (for example, globalization, media "scapes," media hybridization, asymmetrical interdependence), most

of these lose sight of or interest in the actual historical phenomena of imperialism that is the main focus of this book. The book applies a broadly inclusive approach to what we mean by "media," a term that incorporates both the "old" and "new," that is about content, yes, but about a lot more besides, including infrastructures of communication, production, dissemination and reception, and the interests that control them. All technology-enabled forms of communication are here covered by the term "media," always with the important proviso that these are analyzed through broader perspectives of history, power relations and culture. In introducing the term "imperialism," I note that it has a taken-for-granted status within a great deal of scholarship, but it is a status that privileges the feature of territorial acquisition. This is a problem when dealing with periods in which indigenous classes retain nominal ownership of territory or retrieve territory that was taken from them, yet remain vulnerable to other forms of depredation exercised through the greater power of wealthier nations, communities or tribes. In this book, therefore, I am equally interested in territorial and non-territorial forms of imperialism and I find many examples of both throughout the "classic" period of European imperialism from the sixteenth through to the twentieth centuries, and in the imperialism of the USA and its major allies from the nineteenth through to the twenty-first centuries.