

ANALYZING BRITISH CORRESPONDENTS IN THEIR TALES OF MEXICO: A UK STUDY

by

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Abstract

The increase in the commercial relations between the United Kingdom and Mexico has brought more interest from British media. They have presence in newspapers, radio and TV, but especially print media has detected and cultivated the relations of the two countries, especially financial.

There are around 15 British correspondents in Mexico whose primary interest is in business, then culture, tradition and politics, but they tend to mislead audiences when reporting extraordinary events, like disasters or tragedies.

Their coverage can be seen to be as influential as the presence of US media, especially with the Mexican government and local media, but none of them have penetrated the most powerful media: commercial television.

From the perspective of Mexican journalists, the British and other European media reflect a different news angle from the high presence of US media in Mexico.

Despite the largely quiescent political and diplomatic relations between the UK and Mexico, the increase of British foreign investment indicates a regard for the Aztec country as an emerging economy. A case study about the coverage by the *Financial Times* related to the financial irregularities of a charity led by Marta Sahagún de Fox, the Mexican president's wife, will illustrate the discussion.

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*Who are these strange faces in Mexico?
Palefaces, yellowfaces, blackfaces? These are no Mexicans!
Where do they come from, and why?*

*Lord of the Two Ways, these are the foreigners.
They come out of nowhere.
Sometimes they come to tell us things,
Mostly they are the greedy ones.*

What then do they want?

*They want gold, they want silver from the mountains,
And oil, much oil from the coast.
They take sugar from the tall tubes of the cane,
Wheat from the high lands, and maize;
Coffee from the bushes in the hot lands, even the juicy rubber.
They put up tall chimneys that smoke,
And in the biggest houses they keep their machines, that talk
And work iron elbows up and down,
And hold myriad threads from their claws!
Wonderful are the machines of the greedy ones!*
The Plumped Serpent, D.H. Laurence

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

"One bad decision after another. Travel back far enough through history and, if you are feeling uncharitable, you can lay the blame at the door of the Incas."¹

This story published in the *Guardian* in May 2004 was not about the ancient empire from Peru, but about the Aztecs; it was called *Why is Mexico City sinking? How could a British newspaper make such ridiculous mistake, confusing two of the biggest American pre-Hispanic civilisations?*

After many complaints from their readers, two days later they corrected the mistake brightly, explaining the confusion.² The story was published in the science pages, so it is perhaps understandable that the reporter was not very knowledgeable on Latin America.

The embarrassing story about the Incas reflects part of the sloppiness of the British media, not just of *The Guardian*, despite being one of the most balanced and trustworthy papers.³ The fact that it passed through at least one editor, and one subeditor and nobody took it up, shows the level of ignorance about Mexico.

The article about the Incas was written in London, but most of the correspondents in Mexico would not make such mistakes.

This dissertation will discuss the extent of such 'deviances' and other circumstances that can affect the coverage of British journalists in Mexico. Of course, this isolated case would not undermine the whole process, but which process? To answer this is important to identify not just political and economical factors, but cultural beliefs between these two countries. The question is: How Mexican journalists quote and evaluate the British media?

A starting point is a study by the British Journal of Psychology that analyzed specifically the rational and magical thinking in Britain and Mexico and the influence within these beliefs in public opinion, the government and Mexican journalists.

¹ *Guardian*, May 6 2004, p. 2.

² The newspaper published the next correction: The Aztecs, or Mexica, built the original city of Tenochtitlan after they settled and then dominated the Valley of Mexico from the 12th to the 16th centuries. The Incas originated around Lake Titicaca on the border between Peru and Bolivia, but their empire extended only as far north as Ecuador and Colombia (*Guardian*, 2004, p. 21).

³ The *Guardian* is one of the most respected newspapers in the UK since it started as The Manchester *Guardian* 1821. Then in 1964, the paper moved to London to the national market. Since 1936 *Guardian* Media Group, who publish the *Guardian* and *Observer*, is owned by the trustees of the Scott Trust, which "also has the duty to maintain a secure financial footing for the business" (*Guardian*, 2002).

Within their conclusions they found that British people believe that science is the only way to account for natural events, and contrary Mexicans would be more tolerant toward magical explanations. The media are one of the factors affecting these assumptions⁴ that will lead this discussion.

Two styles will guide this dissertation: academic and journalistic. The academic part will be conducted in three essays: the first one is a review of the literature about the topic dealing with international communication and theoretical discussions between Britain and Mexico, their media corporations and their correspondents. The second is an evolution of news values spread to the world, especially the meaning of objectivity and the latest debates about it. The third article is a case study about the controversy between the *Financial Times* and the Mexican first lady in January 2004, the coverage of the irregularities of her charity and the political scandal following it. This was a crucial and unique situation that reflected how a foreign paper can influence a country, its media and public opinion, and force powerful figures to act in response.

Section two includes four articles. The first one, a six month quantitative content analysis about the coverage of Mexico in the British press, that explores the pattern of the coups and disaster syndrome, but also topics related to business, tourism and cultural values.

Both, the content analysis and the academic part of the dissertation, are directed to a British audience: journalists, academics, government and, of course, ordinary readers. In opposition to conventions, the methodology is explained at the beginning of each chapter if it is required.

The last three journalistic articles discuss the coverage and primary data from around 20 interviews with editors, international correspondents, reporters and media analysts from Mexico and the United Kingdom.⁵ They are written mainly for a Mexican audience as analytical features, in a style that would be used in a Mexican magazine. That is why bullet style (or numbering) which are not common in a UK newspaper, would readily be in a magazine as in a separate box.

The three articles reflect the view of British reporters interviewed in the United Kingdom and in Mexico City, and Mexican reporters interviewed in both capitals. The main objectives were to discover what the actors within the news process think about their work? What are the media relations between the two countries? And which aspects have not been covered?

Some of the interviewees only accepted to talk off-the-record and the information provided by them is not directly attributed. The latter might be referred to as a well placed source, a senior journalist or media analyst. There are widely accepted terms to cover such eventualities as the wish for anonymity—as witnessed in the British

⁴ The journal says: In Western culture an individual is encouraged (by school education, media, art, interpersonal communication and other cultural impacts)...in a non-Western society the 'pressure' of scientific rationality on an individual is substantially less evident—due to the lack of formal scientific education and the abundance of pre-Christian magical beliefs and superstitions. (Subbotsky-Quinteros, 2002, pp. 519-543).

⁵ The four articles are based on interviews face to face, by email and telephone realized in London and Mexico City. The questions for British correspondents were: 1.-Why is your media interested in Mexico? How do you cover Mexico, topics, sources? What do you think about Mexican journalism? And how is it to report in Mexico and what is your relation with the government and companies? Mexican journalists were asked: What do you think about British media? How and when do you quote the British media? What is the influence of their stories in the Mexico? And how do they cover Mexico?

Lobby system Most of the interviews and quotes from the Mexican press and books in Spanish were translated to English by the author. The journalistic articles also include footnotes when it is important to give a context for a British audience.

The second article, (the first journalistic one) is a chronicle of the evolution and growth of the Mexican economy and financial reporting from the 70s, through the devastating 80s, the 90s political crisis, and at the same time the contradictory development as a successful emerging market.

The third article explores the views of British correspondents covering the biggest Spanish speaking country in the world, and the commercial agreements between radio, TV and newspapers. The last one reveals how Mexican journalists think about the British media: Are the British more important than those from the US in new rooms? How do they quote them? What is their influence in Mexico?

The 10 appendixes are short topics that are not directly related to the main topic, but that will give a wider angle of the context. The little articles will help to understand process and illustrate examples related to the main topics of each article and essay, and will be indicated if necessary.

Polite people covering savages

When a correspondent arrives in Benito Juarez airport in Mexico City they would need a process of understanding what Alan Riding, a British correspondent that covered Mexico in the 70s, calls the 'complex Mexican society'.⁶

To start 'digesting' the essence of the country they will learn that modern Mexico unlike other Latin American countries has not been destabilised by the Church and the Army, and the post-revolutionary armed forces in 1910 never developed an aristocratic officer class.⁷

Now, four years after the old ruling party lost the presidency in 2000, Mexico is still in a transition to democracy.⁸ Among other things, all decisions in the political arena are prematurely focused on the 2006 presidential election, as witnessed by the fact that tax and electrical reforms have been delayed, and the congress is ruled by the opposition.

The Historian Jean Meyer also goes to the core of the matter: the danger is not just that many people will be disillusioned about real democracy, but that it is happening when there is still much hunger and poverty that has not been solved. "People are not interested in freedom, because they are starving."⁹

⁶ Riding describes Mexico as a country that evolved from ever-present pre-Colombian roots and the Spanish conquest that has produced the most "mestizo" nation in Latin America (*Financial Times*, July 18 1987, Saturday, p. 14). He wrote two books about Mexico. The first one "Distant Neighbours" in 1984, a portrait of the Mexicans; the second "Inside the Volcano", where he asserts that Mexico as a nation searches endlessly for an identity: hovering ambivalently between ancient and modern, traditional and fashionable, Indian and Spanish, Oriental and Western. And it is both the clash and the fusion of these roots that the complexity of Mexico resides. (Riding, 1989, p. 3.)

⁷ *Financial Times*, July 18 1987, p. 14.

⁸ One of the most influential journalists, Rafael Loret de Mola, explains that the political crisis can be defined as communicative worry in the media and a collective uneasiness in society that stimulates political persuasions in the government (Zocalo, Julio 21, 2004)

⁹ *Reforma*, June 19 2004, p. 21.

According to Ronald Buchanan, an Irish-Mexican journalist, who has lived in Mexico City for 18 years and reported for *Financial Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and others, it is kind of difficult to explain politics in Mexico:

The (so called)¹⁰ democratic transition is an extension of the old system, with a privileged group, the powerful political groups. It's very similar to the way it worked in the past, to the extent that instead of fighting internally within the PRI, now there are most separate parties.¹¹

The Mexican anthropologist Roger Bartra has dedicated much time to study the construction of Mexican and Latin American subjectivity and European fascination with it. Amazingly, in the last 30 years the British press has not written anything about him, just one article the *Times*, about an art exhibition in Spain:¹²

... a fascination with our inner selves and primitive ancestors has been a powerful force in Western culture, and its artistic representations are marked by the need to distinguish ourselves from any existing "savages."¹³

Hispanic America, the biggest number of countries worldwide speaking the same language, joins the same race and sustains similar ancient cultures. Widespread debate among Latin American sociologists and social theorists has risen on the question of whether or not countries in the region are modern and is related to the place of Indian cultures.¹⁴ After 500 years, sixty percent of the population in Mexico is mixed-blood race or *mestizo*, around 30% are Indians and 10% white.¹⁵ This is why Indian cultures are one essential part of Mexican culture on one side, and racial mixing constitutes another part, the Western one: this is considered the starting point for understanding Mexico's version of modernity.¹⁶

Bartra believes that the Mexican syncretism has helped hegemonic groups to convey the idea of an identity above cultural and class differences, and "such an identity has been a key element in the formation of a capitalist state, which seeks to hide the multifaceted character of the country."

After some lessons of this beliefs, the correspondents would also have to read one of the most complete portraits of the Mexicans; "Labyrinth of Solitude" written in 1950 by the Literature Nobel Prize Octavio Paz. His essay is a historic description of the Mexican identity, the mix of cultures, the sense of death and life, and the European Catholicism legacy.¹⁷

¹⁰ My words.

¹¹ Buchanan, 2004.

¹² A search in Lexis Nexis with the name "Roger Bartra" in "UK newspapers" will show just one article, most of the results are in Mexican newspapers and magazines like *Nexos*, *La Jornada* or *Este País*, and Europeans like *Le Monde* from France and *El País* from Spain. Some US media did quote him, but no more than two paragraphs.

¹³ *Times*, February 25, 2004, p. 15.

¹⁴ Another important figure that analyzed Mexican culture was the Mexican Nobel Literature Prize Octavio Paz. He argues that historically Anglo-Saxon America inherited the critical ideas of 18th century Europe and the Reformation, Hispanic America was heir to the Catholic universal monarchy. (Paz, 1979. Cited by Herrera, 1998, pp. 105-115).

¹⁵ Census Mexican Population, 2000.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Other classic books about Mexican identity have been written by characters like Elena Poniatowska, Fernando Benítez, Roger Bartra, Leopoldo Zea or Enrique Krauze.

It might be easier for them to find guides about Mexico. For instance, a reference is BBC reporter Nick Caistor, a translator of Latin American writers into English who has written tourists guides about Mexico.

According to him the best of Mexico is in the pre-Hispanic and Hispanic world, the Mexican revolution and the modern Mexico. This mixture interests a lot:

*You do not look at a Mexican as any person; it's a very strong civilization, with different shades and very deep roots. There are also contrasts like the megapolis of Mexico City and the country side; it is a beautiful country, I like especially Oaxaca.*¹⁸

He wrote the volume Mexico City, as part of the series 'Cities of the Imagination', that describe the contrasts of Mexico:

*Where the air is clear showed the chaos of urban life, the way the city had been torn down and rebuilt, and the way that people had been sucked in from the countryside and lived chaotic lives, full of want, and difficulty and poverty. And yet, at the same time, Mexico City offers people the opportunity to get out of that rural boredom and crushing life of the peasant."*¹⁹

¹⁸ Caistor, 2004.

¹⁹ BBC Mundo, 2003.

SECTION ONE

ESSAY ONE

Literature Review: Historical relations in a media-savvy world

Information is power in the foreign policy sense.
Bernard Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*

In 180 years of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Britain, the evolution of media industries has transformed the development of their political foreign policies. Historical research, new papers and communication theories can contribute to understanding this process.²⁰

Mexico's geo-political role as a junction in the 19th Century between Europe and the Pacific, and as a strategic neighbour 'ally'²¹ of the United States in the 20th Century, has forged economical and political interests between these two countries of Morris and Mariachi. To study Britain – as a former Empire, and one of the main actors within the international media flow of information and their tradition of freedom, pluralism and aggressiveness, is important to understand their foreign affairs and media policies.²²

In this context the approach to British media will focus on their economic and political interests in Mexico, especially in the early 19th Century identifying three important roles:

- 1.-Expanding the commercial interests of the Empire.
- 2.-Industry and manufacturing in the early 20th Century.
- 4.-The information battle with the US to control Latin America.

Foreign politics

The origins of international communications²³ are based on international relations theories dating back to the early 19th Century. In those days the free-market economy was promoted by economist Adam Smith, which favoured competition between individuals and corporations free of government intervention. In the late 19th

²⁰ Hansen et al, 1997, p. 67.

²¹ Foreign relations between Mexico and the United States have always been esoteric, violent and economically dependant. Three wars in more than 100 years related to the decrease of European influence in the 19th Century, and the supremacy of the US in the 20th. The influence is reflected in Mexican society has been a perpetual conspiracy, especially after 1867 when the US Civil War ended (Katz, 1981, pp 120-136). Even recently, in December 2003, the Mexican former United Nations officer, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser resigned because he mentioned the old nationalist quote: 'Mexico is the backyard of the United States' (El Universal, 2003, p 1). Thus Anti-Americanism has grown in the last years; a survey in 2000 says that in Mexico, 67% of respondents held a "good" or "very good" opinion of the United States. That figure has fallen in 2003 to 53%, while 39% now hold a "bad" or "very bad" opinion, up from 18% in 2000 (Latinobarometro Chile, 2003).

²² In recent years academic studies have raised issues about communication within societies and exploration of historical developments in communication systems. Hansen says: "We need to be aware of the complex forces when policies are been made. He wants about what a particular policy is: in a single document, a series of documents, a speech by a minister, a paper from a minister? Each of these will contain different clues to 'the' policy in question (Hansen et al, 1997, pp. 68-86).

²³ As a field of international relations, the concept of 'international communications' refers to the field of study that attracted attention of social scientists in the 1970s.

century Karl Marx confronted the beginning of modern capitalism due to a growing gap between the capitalist and working classes.²⁴

At the peak of the British Empire, Marx proposed a socialist society in which the government would control the production and distribution of wealth. Free-market capitalism versus state controlled socialism: these were the two ideologies that shaped international communications in the Cold War era from 1945 to 1989.²⁵

Diplomatic relations started in the 1820s with the first British representative in the 'new continent'²⁶ just after Mexico declared independence from Spain in 1810. Britain was Spain's ally because the British Empire needed to prevent Spain from becoming weak in the European diplomatic system; the interest was clearly commercial and was reflected afterwards in the plundering of natural resources.

Britain had direct influence in Central America since the 18th century with colonies like Guyana, Belize, Jamaica and the Antilles. But Mexico and Latin America were part of the 'British informal Empire', territories which were not ruled directly, but which had important influence of industrial and commercial power.²⁷ Britain, as the world financial centre became Mexico's principal creditor in the 1820s, and started investing in silver, raw materials and railway.

The Mexican-American War in 1846-48

The first big event covered by the British press and related to the newly independent Aztec country was the Mexican-American War in 1846-48, fighting for Texas.

During that time the British Empire had settled in India and Hong Kong. Locally the British press, which had been active since the 17th century, was fighting for its tradition of freedom,²⁸ which was gained later in the 1860s with the emergence of radical press and the repeal of press taxation. According to Curran and Seaton, during this time a section of commercial press became more politically independent as a consequence of the growth of advertising and the emergence of the mass circulation press. The most influential new papers were the *Times*, *The Republican* and the *Observer*.²⁹

The coverage of the Mexican-American war by the leading newspaper, the *Times*, shows the premature concern of Britain over US expansionism in Latin America:

*The Times fulminated against the immorality of slavery and of the southern scheme to annex Texas as a slave state, while exposing America's imperialist ambitions as, among other things, an attempt to shore up the nation's fragile stability through the escape valve of western migration.*³⁰

Mexico lost the war sold almost half of its territory in 1848, and then country started a bloody civil war that lasted until 1861. At the end of the revolt the new president Benito Juarez, a native indigenous and nationalist, suspended payments to its

²⁴ Gudykunst, 2002, p. 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Mexican Embassy in the UK, 1996.

²⁷ Crystal, 2002, p. 227.

²⁸ The *Times* editor John Delane, formulated the doctrine that newspapers had the right to maintain their independence (McBride, 1988, p. 9).

²⁹ Curran-Seaton, 1993, p. 11.

³⁰ Karush, 2004, n.d.

European creditors Spain, Britain and France, who instantly demanded military action. The French attacked Mexico from 1863-67, supported morally by the British and Spain. Mexico was helped politically by the United States just after the end of their Civil War, and Juarez expelled the old traditional French Foreign Legion from the country.³¹

Twenty years later, in the 1880s, General Porfirio Diaz established a military dictatorship that lasted 30 years, and like most of these type of regimes, he created economical stability in spite of its violent and repressive actions. This pro European regime encouraged the presence of British banks, as well as other political and cultural relationships with the old continent, especially with France.³²

During that time global media developed haltingly in Europe in the nineteenth century, especially in France and Britain. New papers and periodicals were written almost exclusively for domestic audiences and to this day new papers remain the media industry that is least integrated into the global media system³³

Despite the fact that domestic news has always dominated the British press,³⁴ most of the stories related to Mexico came from the United States. For instance, when the era of press barons was due to start in Victorian Britain³⁵ the *Daily News*, published on May 31, 1886 a one paragraph story noted as being from New York:

*A dispatch from Mexico announces that President Diaz has ordered the National Bank to place at the disposal of the Mexican financial agent in London a sufficient amount to meet the first coupon of the Consolidated Debt due on July 1st.*³⁶

Before the fall of Diaz the role of the firm of engineering contractors S. Pearson & Son who had become a leading contractor to Mexico's government during his regime.³⁷ This company later founded the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*, two of the most influential foreign papers in Mexico.

Oil and Mexican nationalism

In 1910 the Mexican revolution, a bloody civil war that popularized the guerrilla legends (Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa), is considered by historians as the starting point of the industrialized, modern and democratic Mexico.

After the revolution the special relationship with Britain ended with a silent battle for Mexican oil between American and British companies, until the nationalisation of the Mexican oil industry in 1938 by the autonomist president Lázaro Cárdenas.

While Mexico was recovering from a bloody 19th Century, the pioneering efforts of news agencies that developed early in the 20th Century, contributed to the emergence of the mass daily press.³⁸ In the first decades the French and British

³¹ Geraghty, 1986, pp. 80-91.

³² Skirius, 2003, p. 25.

³³ Herman, 1997, p. 12.

³⁴ *Guardian*, 1st October 2001, p. 2.

³⁵ Currey-Seaton, 1993, p.50.

³⁶ Online British Library, 2003.

³⁷ Pearson bought large areas of land, and was permitted to exploit the rich deposits of oil that he found and formed the Mexican Eagle Oil company, a large supplier to the US. (*Times*, November 10, 2003, p.29).

³⁸ MacBride et al, 1988, p.9.

empires still had a solid structure in the communication industry; according to the US academic Herbert I. Schiller this was an important role in the colonial system:

*The British global imperial preferences that tied together that colonial system's network of dependencies and sealed them off from possible commercial penetration by other entrepreneurs.*³⁹

At the end of First World War, Britain controlled the physical hardware of sub oceanic cables.⁴⁰ This strengthened European and US positions and led to a rapid expansion of world trade, which demanded immediate and vastly improved communication links.⁴¹

Communications technologies at the beginning of the century were crucial for the functioning of the telegraph and radio, since they enabled Western news agencies such as *Reuters* and *AFP* to complete the 'cartels' controlling the international flow of news.⁴² However, the first challenge to their monopoly arrived with *Associated Press* from the United States, when it started supplying news to the Spanish-speaking continent in the 1930s. This news agency, subsidised by their government, began to expand internationally, parcelling political changes in Europe within the weakening of the European empires.⁴³

During these years the British press started an industrialisation process, and established a debate about the international flow of news, a discussion determined by the organisation of the news-processing companies,⁴⁴ in other words, the framework of news values that Curran and Seaton detect:

*In order to get made into news, events have to happen in places convenient for the newsgathering agencies, to be of a recognised and acceptable kind, come from a reliable and predictable source, and fit into journalists' framework of news values. These rules and habits have become worldwide.*⁴⁵

The diplomatic flow of news

In the beginning of World War II, almost all governments around the world set up "information" and "propaganda" agencies, hired public relations firms, and organised regular and systematic "briefing" meetings and lavish diplomatic parties to influence their foreign and domestic audiences.⁴⁶

For instance in World War II, when political propaganda structures were sharpened, British diplomats easily established in Mexico a secret propaganda plan with France to sway public opinion against Germany. This was done in just three months time

³⁹ Richstad-Anderson, 1981, p. 164.

⁴⁰ They had a critical advantage in its control of the copper and gutta-percha markets – the raw materials for the manufacture of cable – since the world rates were fixed in British mining companies, which owned copper deposits and mines in Chile, the world's biggest producer (Richstad-Anderson, 1981, p. 165).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Gudykunst, 2002, p. 5. [Complementary information in APPENDIX 4: "US and UK news for Mexico: regulations differences" on page 125].

⁴³ Thussu, 2000, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Curran-Seaton, 1993, p. 277.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Gudykunst, 2002, p. 8.

and supported by *Havas* news agency,⁴⁷ diplomats, corporations and local newspapers.⁴⁸

During that time, European media companies like *Havas*, *Reuters*, the *BBC* and *Pearson* invested in Mexico and Latin America, concerned by US cultural and political expansionism.⁴⁹

The theories of the Frankfurt School formulated from the 1920s become a central element in the debate: it is necessary to analyse the form of the media and the way in which they are used, and not only the content of the message.⁵⁰ These assumptions generated an interesting debate on the role of communication with regard to cultural identity and intercultural aspects.⁵¹

This diplomatic flow of information as the most traditional form, changed after the advent of modern communication technology and the emergence of nongovernmental actors. This was more orientated to the masses, what researchers called “public diplomacy”, particularly sensitive to public opinion.⁵²

The dangerous order of media theories

During the 70s, international communication increasingly captivated the attention of a growing number of social scientists who challenged the role of the dominant news agencies. The concept of Cultural Imperialism introduced by Herbert I. Schiller,⁵³ and other studies from Armand Mattelart, a Belgian academic based in Chile, with the famous book *How to Read Donald Duck, Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, censored in the US.⁵⁴

The idea of the Free Flow of Information from the United States was confronted by these scholars and supported by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in the 70s.⁵⁵ This institution was crucial in appointing scholars to investigate the imbalance in the world news stream through the active presence of Third World academics and journalists. They proposed instead a New World Information and the Communication Order (NWICO).⁵⁶ In Mexico researchers like Guillermo Orozco and Nestor Garcia Canclini contributed to the debate.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ The French news agency was also subsidised by the government and later became Agence France Press.

⁴⁸ Riblo, 1983, pp. 112-126.

⁴⁹ [For more information see SECTION 2. ARTICLE 2 “British correspondents in Mexico: Covering a wild country”].

⁵⁰ Gudykunst, 2002, p. 5.

⁵¹ The theoretical conception of intercultural communications began in the 1950s during the Cold War, but took place in the 1970s (Gudykunst, 2002, p. 7). This new area of research has grown during the last several decades and become a legitimate area of inquiry. The paradigm was pro Western and anti communist in ideology (Mowlana, 1998, p. 5).

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Schiller is a critical scholar at the University of California, claimed that this cultural penetration was in the name of the Free Flow of Information (Gudykunst, 2002, p. 7).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ MacBride et al, 1988, pp. 34-43.

⁵⁶ The Colombian literature Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez, wrote for UNESCO: More democratic communication structures are anational and international need of peoples everywhere promoting access, participation, decentralisation, open management, and the diffusion of the power, concentrated in the hands of commercial or bureaucratic interests. This particularly in third world countries dominated by repressive minority regimes. (MacBride et al, 1988, p. 281).

⁵⁷ Canclini, 1999.

Several Western countries however, objected that it was an attempt by Third World and Communist dictatorships to destroy the freedom of the press. The United States and Great Britain withdrew from UNESCO in 1985 and 1986 respectively because of the NWICO debate.⁵⁸

The academics pointed to paternalism and lack of ethno-culture in the West's supposedly 'idealistic approach' to assisting developing nations with Western information and communication technologies. In the media this was shown by the relatively greater attention to Europe and the United States, and the emphasis on disasters, coups, revolutions and other negative news about Latin America, Africa and Asia.⁵⁹

Schiller warns that the concentration of international news dissemination has given rise to charges of media imperialism "the dependence of domestic media systems on dominant foreign media systems: Western news purveyors slight the happenings and the information needs of people in developing nations."⁶⁰ Thussu gave a Latin American angle:

*The critics started with the gap between rich and poor people, the concern was the validity of the developmental project and the fact that modernization programs were exacerbating the already deep social and economical irregularities.*⁶¹

The theoretical debate was influenced by a sociological framework until the 80s and 90s.⁶² Structural functionalist theories applied in the modern age claimed that the influence of certain social structures considerably modify the information flow.⁶³ Now, the most recent ideas of the internationalisation of media corporations in the United Kingdom, especially broadcasting, that supersede and complement the freedom and dependent theories of the sixties and seventies.

Broadcasting a smaller world

In the last half of the 20th Century, Britain continued as a creditor for Mexico before the development boom and the creation of international institutions and media corporations established in the region. Today Britain is one of the biggest investors in Mexico, having been number one in the 19th century.⁶⁴

The media progressively globalises and the commercial significance is accomplished by different concerns, like the market position of news organisations, depending on advertising and revenues, searching for formulas to address new audiences, and the strategic important new papers fostering politicians and elite groups.⁶⁵

The real development of international broadcasting was to be a propaganda tool on both sides of the world.⁶⁶ In contrast to the US and German TV state model, the

⁵⁸ Gudykunst, 2002, p. 7. The UK rejoined in 1997, and the US until 2003.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ MacBride et al, 1988, pp. 34-43.

⁶¹ Thussu, 2000, p. 59.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Manning, 2001, p. 23.

⁶⁴ Mexican Embassy in the UK, 1996.

⁶⁵ Manning, 2001, p. 23.

⁶⁶ The first radio transmission of human voice in 1903 was developed with military interests in mind, but it was consolidated during the Second World War.

*British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) prided itself in presenting mature, balanced view, winning by argument rather than hammering home a point.*⁶⁷

In the beginning of the 20th century the press was no longer the dominant source of political knowledge, and TV and radio broadcasting emerged as the most powerful media.⁶⁸ They changed production practices, especially with international news.⁶⁹

Ralph Negrine states that this economic internationalisation of media can destabilise established national media practices, because enterprises increasingly need large sums of capital that they can not afford to devote to foreign interests. So now, individual media institutions are likely to survive either in isolation or as independent trading units. He addresses the consequences:

*Adhering to such notions as balance and impartiality may be justifiable in a national context, though even this is increasingly suspect, in the international context these ideas and their attendant practices will appear meaningless.*⁷⁰

Covering foreign news is much more difficult for journalists than domestic news because staff levels are smaller, research facilities are more limited, language barriers are troublesome, and transmission difficulties may be enormous.⁷¹ According to Doris Graber there are more concerns:

*Space and limitation of time in stories, because foreign events are often unintelligible without adequate background information or interpretation... some confusion of individual stories has risen from the fact that many stories about developing nations are transmitted through communication centres such as London or New York.*⁷²

Pictures are especially important for foreign news because they bring unfamiliar sights, which might be hard to imagine, directly into viewers' homes. Stories become more comprehensible if audiences can experience them visually.⁷³

These concerns are the new scholar interests that shifted in the 90s, the era of globalisation, privatisation and informatisation. Now the studies focus particularly on the role of communication satellites, telecommunication, and Internet, its consequences and the digital gap between developed and developing nations.⁷⁴

Latin America: US economic colonies

Latin America's increase broadcasting commercial media in the 80s and 90s provided major opportunities for global media firms, especially the ones from the United States, combined the continent-wide adoption of neoliberalist economic

⁶⁷ Thussu, 2000, p. 35.

⁶⁸ Currey-Seaton, 1993, p. 5.

⁶⁹ This is what Negrine called the "Internationalisation of Television": altering the nature of the industry, and carrying with it an enormous impact on the patterns of development within countries (Negrine, 1994, p. 208.)

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29. [Complementary information in APPENDIX 3: "US-UK news from Mexico, regulation differences" on page 127]

⁷¹ Graber, 2002, p. 360.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

policies.⁷⁵ In Latin America most of the population speak Spanish and 25% around 300 native languages, English is widely understood among the upper and middle classes, but there is a viable middle and upper class, especially in nations like Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Argentina, showing a fondness for Hollywood and Anglo-American dominant culture.⁷⁶

The rise of the 'global public sphere' along with CNNw and a 24-hour channel launched in 1980 provided a new actor in the media policy evolution: Infotainment. In 1997, they launched for Latin American audiences CNN in Spanish based in Atlanta, and then other languages that expanded the TV station in other major non-English markets, along with the expanding the Anglo-American news values around the world.⁷⁷ This reflected the need for local news in local languages.

*This explains why Latin America has become a prime battleground for digital satellite television. Miami has emerged as the media capital of the Spanish region; most Latin cable and satellite channels are headquartered there, as is the coordination of Latin American advertising.*⁷⁸

According to UNESCO's World Culture Report in 1998, 62% of television programmes shown in Latin America channels originated from the United States and since the launch of TNT Latin America available in Spanish, the pan-region network US-based television companies have expanded considerably into the market.⁷⁹

The causes are mostly economic as Negrine explains:

*Media often find it cheaper and advantageous to broadcast foreign/non-national material. Globalisation goes two ways and more and more British companies are making expansion overseas a priority: much of the wealth of British media companies comes from there.*⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Herman-McChensey, 1997, pp. 66-67. [Complementary information in APPENDIX 3: "Letter to the Editors, (Our) America is not the United States on page 118]

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Thussu, 2000, p. 157.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Thussu, 2000, p. 188.

⁸⁰ Negrine, 1994, p. 208.

SECTION ONE
ESSAY TWO

The influence of objectivity from the Western media to the world



An ongoing Diary in London, Pedro Meyer (Mexican Photographer)

Traditionally... foreign news is considered to be rather 'difficult'. The Englishman's knowledge of geography has always been hazy and he dislikes having to remember the difference between Bucharest and Budapest. He is not interested in even the simplest political facts about countries which are not at war with him.

Ian Fleming, 1950 quoted by Jeremy Tunstall, 1996.

London is arguably the world's most influential media capital. From 'the island' news providers dominate most of the world wires, newspapers, magazines and broadcast reports, to nearly half of the countries in the world.⁸¹

The headquarters of *Reuters* and *AP*, the two biggest news agencies are in London, and other British international institutions with a global reach like the *Financial Times*, the *Economist* and the *Guardian* are there too.⁸²

In terms of broadcasting stations *BBC News*, *Sky News*, *AP Television* and *CNN* among others have their biggest offices in London. *BBC World* has a global service of 150 journalists from about 30 countries and it's the single biggest international medium in the world.⁸³

What is the influence of this media orb to Mexico? From the historical point of view and the origins of journalism schools it is related to an indirect liberal journalistic relationship between the two countries and their media.

Why are British people obsessed with war, weather and crime? Is that part of their society? Far from there, for Mexican journalists it's difficult to understand that in the UK reporters have a significant role in culture and politics, and write books and, most of them, even at the beginning of their careers, earn enough money to live a solvent life.

They have the oldest and most recognized quality papers in the world, and among the worst and stunning tabloids, but all with large circulations. Their history is of freedom, pluralism and aggressiveness, and their open battle versus press officers and public relation companies: the so-called 'spin doctors'.⁸⁴ As in British society as a whole, they combine the old with the leading edge and have specialized areas like "peace" or "alternative" journalism, as Harcup said "There is a long and continuing tradition of alternative media being produced to challenge the discourse(s) of mainstream media".⁸⁵ Also universities research the media constantly and most of newspapers have media sections that talk about 'other media', something not quite often in Mexico.

The history of British journalism represents this evolution of news discourse. According to Matheson, beginning from the time of Victorian journalism from the 1880s and ending in the 1930s, the media discourse suffered three main changes:⁸⁶

a) The wide range of styles became subsumed under a single style; b) the epistemological status of the news changed from that of a collection of raw information to that of a form of knowledge in itself, not dependent on other discourses, and c) the news developed an independent social status, which somehow was starting question social conventions of public discourse.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Graber, 2000.

⁸² Even the *Guardian*, known as representing the liberal Britain, has a separate edition printed in central Europe, and *Guardian Weekly* for the rest of the world.

⁸³ News companies compete fiercely, and most events in the world are now collected by five major wire services: *AP*, *Reuters*, *AFP*, *ITAR-TSS* and *Xinhua*. But *Reuters* and *AP* are the only two heavy-weights. *AP* is by far the largest, in the year 2000 it maintained 95 international bureaus and 146 in the US, which means 56 more than *Reuters*, the strongest historical competitor (Graber, 2000, p. 350). [Complementary material in APPENDIX 3: "US-UK news in Mexico: regulation differences" on page 125.]

⁸⁴ Stain, 2003.

⁸⁵ Harcup, T., 2003, p. 356.

⁸⁶ Matheson, 2000, p. 557.

This was the “New Journalism”, while Victorian news seemed only to represent information, the modern news story was itself a piece of information.⁸⁸ Then journalism gained its authority and status as a meaning-broker in modern society, and⁸⁹ their new form of writing was self-sufficient. But Matheson’s study clarifies that by no means were they independent of the power structures of society; however news acquired the ability to refract various practices and ideologies.⁹⁰

From the Latin American perspective, the Mexican modern press, meaning *El Universal* and *Excelsior* as the oldest newspapers in the 20th century, were inspired by *la prensa anglosajona* like the *New York Times*, which was deeply inspired by the *Times* of London, especially in cosmetic aspects. But the origins of Mexican media are by contrast the French press.⁹¹

The questions of objectivity

Western media have dominated the discussed international flow of information. They created the framework of news values around the world, adopted by many countries, among them Mexico.

Many debates from Galtung and Ruge, Allan, Bagdikian and Pedelty have heated the recent debate of news values and factors governing the production of news. The idea of “objectivity” has been evolving since the beginning of the 18th century. According to Hackett and Zhao, in the United States and Canada news reports were much more written in free style, “governed by chronology, the development of the argument, of the unfolding order and perceived newsworthiness.”⁹²

The change of media values in the 1850s helped journalists in the Western world support stories with a context, to interpret facts and retain objectivity at the same time, yet the distinction between news and views “was not rigid.”⁹³

The commercial press was born offering moral lessons in their reports, but with particular interests. Hackett and Zhao explain that the ideological framework of objectivity emerged as a principle: a narrative purporting to take the universal rather than a particular perspective.⁹⁴

But then “objectivity” demanded more control of reporters and editors because it expected every item to be attributed to some authority. This increased the quantity of literal facts in the news and strengthened the growing sense of discipline and ethics

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 559.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 565.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 571.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ The French school was a disciplinary regime with awards and punishment, where official news flooded the front pages and praising the virtues and customs of the political establishment. In the British school, news was assorted and with a low inclination to official sources and an emphasis on sports and entertainment news, two activities that tended to create business. The French model was established in Mexico during the last century, following the state purposes, and the British model arrived late to Mexico, with some crucial developments and changes of the media in the 1970s. The “New Journalism” was at least 50 years late. (Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 145).

⁹² Hackett-Zhao, 1997, p. 41.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 95. The ideological perspective was still explicit even in the context of new industries and the end of the radical press in the 19th century in Europe.

⁹⁴ Hackett-Zhao, 1997, p. 95. These concepts became incorporated as key legitimations of liberal-democratic capitalism

in journalism, explains Bagdikian.⁹⁵ Also the invention of the traditional “inverted pyramid”⁹⁶ was an important development in writing news as it happened, like machines, without prejudice, colour or style. “So was born an artificial kind of news writing, far removed from every day speech”.⁹⁷

Hackett and Zhao explain that the discourse of commercial press left the revolutionary and social angle, and turned to a popular discourse less hostile to the existing social institutions. These papers had the ability to write radical analysis rather than surface rhetoric, but just as a commodity for a company, and dropped it once it was no longer helping to attract a profitable readership.⁹⁸

During this century a new breed of journalist emerged that helped to entrench the concept of news as a set of factually accurate and non-partisan accounts of events. These were among others the people’s journals that emphasized not opinion but news, especially sensationalist.⁹⁹ It was a legitimate controversy, built in the organization of the news-processing companies, rather than the importance of events, as Curran and Seaton explain.¹⁰⁰

*In order to get made into news, events have to happen in places convenient for the newsgathering agencies, and to be of a recognized and acceptable kind, come from a reliable and predictable source.*¹⁰¹

According to Bagdikian in the 20th century two generations of newspaper people have incorrectly labelled “objectivity” as a different practice, that of appealing to serious journalism to straining out ideas and ideology from public affairs.¹⁰²

One of the most recent positions about objectivity is the so-called ‘peace journalism’ school, which questions objectivity as a goal or value and stimulates dialog for a complete idea of the coverage of conflicts. Johan Galtung wrote in 1998 a strong critique about the conventional idea of war reporting:

*The low road, dominant in the media, sees a conflict as a battle, as a sports arena or gladiator circus. The parties, usually reduced to two, are combatants in a struggle to impose their goals. The reporting model is that of a military command: who advances, who capitulates short of their goals; losses are counted in terms of numbers killed or wounded and material damage.*¹⁰³

These ideas apply to any story and especially to one of the most criticized parts of Mexican journalism:

⁹⁵ Bagdikian, 1992.

⁹⁶ Where reporters put the most important information first, so even when they got cut off, their paper still would be able to report the gist of the story. The structure is: Summary lead, most pertinent, quotes/facts that back up lead, supporting points ranked in order of most to least important. (Lynch, 2002a).

⁹⁷ Hackett-Zhao, 1997, p. 41.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁰ Curran-Seaton, 1993, p. 277.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Bagdikian, 1992.

¹⁰³ Galtung, 1998. Cited by Lynch, 2002.

*The same applies to verbal battles: who outsmarts the other, who comes out closest to his original position. War journalism has sports journalism, and court journalism, as models.*¹⁰⁴

In the twentieth century objectivity was adjusted and subjectivity was recognized. The most important step was the extension of the rubric of objectivity to include interpretive as well as “straight” reporting. Hence, interpretative reporting meant, “placing news into an appropriate context.”¹⁰⁵

With the growth of television and radio media and their general commercial imperative, the regular entertainment programmes switched to attract a wide disparity of consumers with another technique: sex and violence. “The Emergence of broadcasting in the 1920s did not create an alternative news system”, explains Bagdikian.

But as a complex subject and uncertain issue, journalists in the field do not feel compelled to follow conventions of objectivity, or as they call it partisan reporting. For instance, the holistic notion of objectivity and the framework of news values that most of the Western media follows the next typical display:

- 1.-Government said and then the opposition said, an approach in news reporting in parliamentary politics.
- 2.-When identifying two or more sides of an event and access to one party is impossible, the news texts characteristically contain an ‘unavailable to comment’ clause, and rhetorical claims that they attempted to achieve ‘balance.’¹⁰⁶

Hackett and Zhao conclude that rules of objectivity are often suspended in reporting on politics in foreign countries, especially if that country has a government that operates according to the liberal-democratic ideological framework

These assumptions are crucial to understand the British coverage of Mexico.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Hackett-Zhao, 1997, p.42.

¹⁰⁶ Hackett-Zhao, 1997, p.148.

¹⁰⁷ For a better idea of how foreign desks in London are structured and work worldwide see APPENDIX 4: “Foreign news structure in the UK” on page 137.

SECTION TWO
ESSAY THREE

**Don't mess with the president's wife unless
you are the *Financial Times*: A case study**



***Financial Times* Magazine, January 31st 2004**

Ernesto¹⁰⁸ was buying stuff in a Mexican supermarket, when at the cash point the dispenser invited him to donate spare coins for minority groups. Then he asked which charity, and the dispenser answered: If I give you the name, you will not cooperate, it is Fundacion Vamos Mexico (Let's go Mexico), but when I say it, no one wants to cooperate.

How could Mexicans have that kind of aversion to donate spare coins to a charity that happened to be launched by the first lady?

This person gave the idea to the reporter of the *Financial Times* to write a story that was the beginning of the worst clash that the paper has experienced with a Mexican government in the last 30 years. But also one of the most important stories picked by the Mexican media following the coverage of a British newspaper.

It is not common to read an article that evidences the ambitions of the first lady, the awry finances of her charity, and the attempts at harassment towards a foreign publication. In resume, it was the most unpleasant article about Marta Sahagún's image at the beginning of 2004, considering that during that time she was a potential candidate for the presidency.

The article touched upon the roots of the 'new' Mexican government of change, the political system, and its grotesque contradictions personalized in the first lady. I also was the leading article of the weekend magazine of one of the most influential newspapers in the world, which has even more readers in the United States than in the United Kingdom and of course, in Mexico.

This text will discuss the news coverage can amplify the effect of reality by bringing them to society, as a clear example of the influence of foreign media.¹⁰⁹ According to Jake Lynch BBC reporter and advocate of peace journalism this is the process of the 'positive feedback loop' as a model about the influence of news coverage in a sequence of cause and effect.¹¹⁰ The precise nature of this influence is always the result of conscious news decisions about what to cover and how to cover reality. This conceptual tool will analyse the process of journalism and the decisions by reporters and editors in commissioning, newsgathering and editing.

The coverage of Vamos Mexico

The first time the *Financial Times* talked about Mrs Sahagún was November 12 2001 a few months after the charity was launched in August 2001. The story was centrally to compare Marta with Evita, the iconic Argentinean figure, and even then they were already questioning the charity's finances.

"More worrying, say observers, is the funding drive for her foundation, which has reportedly included asking wealthy Mexican industrialists for hefty donations", the FT said.

During those days, some stories appeared in the Mexican media about opposition parties' deputies and NGOs accusing Marta of using public resources for a private

¹⁰⁸ Not his real name.

¹⁰⁹ Lynch, 2002, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15. In relation to science, the feedback loop mechanism is a control device in a system, which can have negative-feedback mechanisms which tend to counterbalance positive changes and so maintain stability. (Dictionary of Plant Sciences, 1998).

institution. Apart from that, the Mexican media was almost transcribing their speeches, with the particular angle of presenting them as an institution that promoted 'transparency'. The stories were like press releases about information and the figures, but none analyzed them.

In this context, if most of journalists' attention is claimed by issues related to the foundation as a model of transparency, then the cumulative effect may be to send out the message that the charity is helping poor people, hence she will become more popular and cherished.

According to the 'feedback loop' model, reporting of negative fact or a scandal (like irregularities in the charity) in a helpful or gratifying way helps to increase the calculations of newspapers. But media companies would not take the risk of being overlooked with some 'sensitive topics' amid the growing clamour for attention.

It also creates an incentive for more of the same or for a similar fact or statement (news) to be provided later.¹¹¹ This process reflects news frames that contain deeply held cultural subjectivities of the reporters and will therefore appear as 'natural' expositions of reality.¹¹²



Slight changes, but not substantial

The coverage of Mexican media continued similar until February 2002 when private companies denied cooperating with funds for her foundation, and opposition parties were questioning the use of public funds for a private association. So, more areas of society were complaining.

In contrast to the 'framed coverage' newspapers started to give voice to affected groups, suggesting that she might not be doing a clean job, hence she was dishonest. These issues were just allegations and no clear evidence, but still 'sensitive material' related directly to a

powerful public figure. However media did not analyse in depth the finances of the charity.

Between 2002 and the beginning of 2003 the term 'transparency' mentioned in the media reflected a semantic confusion. In one side, it was portrayed as an example of transparency and Sahagún as a woman that cares about minority groups. So the support from the president, from some businessman, and other charities would confirm that she was doing a good job, and "among poor and middle class, she remained exceedingly popular".¹¹³ Thus state's 'indirect support' was justified,

¹¹¹ Lynch, 2002a.

¹¹² Giltin 1980, p. 6. Cited by Pedelty p. 8.

¹¹³ *Financial Times*, January 31 2004, p. 16.

especially because president Fox praised her charity publicly.¹¹⁴ According to Lynch the strategy of reporting is based on calculations about facts, and on an understanding derived from experience of previous reporting¹¹⁵ Then popularity was a response to a personal agenda followed by the media.

But in the other side, some stories were questioning the promotion of 'transparency'. Most of the articles related were in the frame of alternative or supplementary information, and then popularity of Sahagún would appear to make less sense. These stories were clearly an incentive from journalists willing to offer something different, even if the story 'goes wrong' from the perspective of the source or the political figure implicated.¹¹⁶

So for the first lady the allegations about the irregularities were just political vengeance from people against the 'new government of change'. In fact, most of the stories questioning the finances were not in front pages of newspapers, but suddenly it was in the front page of the FT Weekend magazine.

The FT changing the feedback loop

The 31 of January 2004 the weekend magazine of the pink newspaper published the story in the cover that arrived as a bombshell to the Mexican government and the first lady's credibility. The text called "Eyes on the prize. Mexico first lady... or next president?" questioned three main topics related to the lack of transparency: financial irregularities, presidential ambitions and the illegal use of public funds, harassment and intimidation to the correspondents.¹¹⁷

News is about change, people read papers to find out what has happened since yesterday. "Inevitably, particular changes suit some people better than others. All change is *conflictual* - it follows that all news is, to a greater or lesser extent, about conflict."¹¹⁸ This story did not suit Sahagún's plans.

In fact a media analyst revealed that during the 10 months that the reporter Sara Silver wrote the story, it coincided that she was pregnant, and the bureaucracy and harassment from the charity affected directly on the correspondent's health, and in the head of the bureau in Mexico John Authers, who happens to be her husband. For instance, every time the FT contacted the 'private' charity, the response was from Los Pinos staff, the president's house. The Foreign Press Association even had to arrange a meeting with 'important figures' from Vicente Fox government and the FT correspondents to discuss about the embarrassing issue.

¹¹⁴ This conception is explained by the media analyst Parenty: the worst forms of tyranny –or certainly the most successful ones- are not those we rail against but those that so insinuate themselves into the imaginary of our consciousness and the fabric of our lives as not to be perceived as tyranny (Parenty, 1986, p 7. Cited by Pedelty p8).

¹¹⁵ Lynch, 2002, p. 37.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ See APPENDIX 8: "Extracts from the Financial Times article" on page 149.

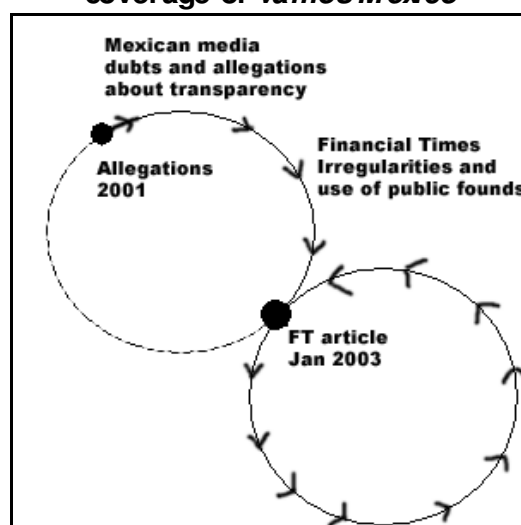
¹¹⁸ Lynch, 2002, p 19.

They confronted Mrs Fox and Mexico's Government, using accurate figures and its political repercussions.¹¹⁹ It was a special report with solid information with British's directness and hard-line style questioning the figures of the charity:

In fact, only 4.6m pesos (£226,000) of the concert's proceeds of 72m pesos, were donated that year to "those who need the most", according to the 2001 audited statements... the foundation would not make its financial officers available to answer questions about its audited financial statements.

The next graphic shows how linear process of coverage as the circular model of feedback loop,¹²⁰ until the FT published the story, and then the follow up by the Mexican papers. The agenda was moved and the whole process from "doubts and allegations about transparency", changed to another circle of "confirmed irregularities and use of public funds".

The feedback loop the media coverage of *Vamos Mexico*



The same Saturday the story was published on the front page local Mexico City newspaper *El Independiente*, (a paper with a critical coverage especially of Marta Sahagún).¹²¹ The headline was: *Vamos Mexico* has obscure finances according to the *Financial Times*.

Monday 2nd February: In the front page *El Independiente* made a follow up, as well as *La Jornada* newspaper. The later with the headline: *Financial Times* puts Marta Sahagún in trouble. No other newspaper wrote about it and but TV channels like Azteca and Imagen TV did not mention anything either. Most of radio stations and CN 40 channel did cover the story and surprisingly Televisa gave national dimension to the story and did cover it on February first.

Tuesday 3rd February: The first lady responded to the FT (looking annoyed and angry) in a brief press conference disqualifying the article as a "defamation" and asked the foundation to issue a prompt reply to the "lack of precision". She also was

¹¹⁹ [See APPENDIX 8: "Extracts from January's Financial Times article" on page 149].

¹²⁰ Lynch, 2002, p. 18.

¹²¹ In October 2001 the Director of Milenio Diario was Raymundo Riva Palacio, and because of his critical coverage about the first lady he was sacked. Riva Palacio was director of *El Independiente*. (Etcetera, 2004)

interview in Televisa on prime time and most of new papers got the story. The front page of *La Jornada* was very similar: Martha goes against the *Financial Times*.¹²²

But surprisingly other new papers covered the stories from the perspective of the



complaints of the first lady, without a context and mentioning the *Financial Times* just in passing. (*Excelsior, El Economista, El Financiero and Reforma*).¹²³ Some of them (*El Universal, Milenio y Crónica*) even highlighted other angles, like Sahagún's interest to be the "Major of Mexico City".¹²⁴

Then on February four the charity had to publish details of

the financial accounts due to domestic political and media pressure.

So, why did she react versus the *Financial Times* if the story had already been in the media? Because the article broke the barriers of English, had already invaded public opinion, and many political columnists talked about the topic in depth.¹²⁵

But *El Independiente* was the only paper that during one week published in the front page related articles. The 10th of February *Reforma* interviewed Hugh Carnegie, international deputy managing editor of the *Financial Times*, who said that they will continue publishing sorties related to the political activities of the first lady if they have an international interest.¹²⁶

The coverage of the FT in the next months went further while every day political figures and media complained openly about the role of the first lady. In February the published around eight stories related, and in the next months their stories were focused on "how Marta Fox has affected her husband's presidency" and hence the democratic process.

Opinion and discussions

Mexican new papers might not sell enough like other countries, but there are factors of quantity and habit which give new paper discourse a major ideological importance, according to expert in British media discourse Roger Fowler.

¹²² This was the response to the *Financial Times*: Criticism is always welcome, but I will never be in agreement with lies, calumnies, defamation or the tendentious management or twisting of information. For that reason, I once again reiterate my commitment to absolute freedom of expression based on ethics and responsibility. (*Financial Times*, February 3 2004, p. 3).

¹²³ Since the day the foundation was launched in 2001 until March 2004, *El Universal* published around 66 stories about the transparency of the finances. In February 3rd when the charity updated in its website information about their finances, *El Universal* did not publish that the owner Juan Francisco Ealy Ortiz was among the founders of *Vamos México*. (Etcetera, March 2004).

¹²⁴ Etcetera, March, 2004.

¹²⁵ They were among the most influential voices of Mexico in all national newspapers like Carlos Ramírez, Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa, Ciro Gómez Leyva, Raymundo Riva Palacio, Raúl Trejo Delarbre, Miguel Badillo and Sergio Sarmiento.

¹²⁶ *Reforma*, February 10 2004.

For the majority of people, reading the daily newspapers makes up their most substantial and significant consumption of printed discourse and it is second only to television as a window to the world.¹²⁷

The influence of newspapers in Mexico is reflected in its hold of 13% of the population while radio has 36%. Still television has the biggest audience with 85% of the 21.9 million of houses with a TV.¹²⁸

That is why Sahagún had to answer the FT as soon as possible, because the story was already in the Mexican media, damaging the image of the 'presidential couple'.

The role of part of commercial TV as a permanent support and defender of Marta Sahagún reflects how powerful and biased can these media be in Mexico.

Elena Gallegos, the Editor in Chief of *La Jornada* said that they gave importance to the story because of the chauvinism of political officials, "we know how important the foreign media are for them".

It was a sensible story fairly covered by two critical papers and the quick response and the harsh rejection of the reporter's accusations were a clear sign that the first lady was politically wounded. So a part of the press echoed and reinforced the story, and exposed other media that remained in silence. These two papers confirmed how important a foreign medium can be in Mexico.¹²⁹

"The Mexican media quotes foreign media because they themselves are not taken as seriously. They don't have the influence and they would like to have it, so they quote the foreign press" said the *Economist's* correspondent in Mexico Richard Cockett.



¹²⁷ Fowler, 1991.

¹²⁸ Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 51.

¹²⁹ A further analysis can be done about the follow up of international agencies and North American papers about the same topic. Reuters coverage was exceptional, with large texts and transcribing to Spanish almost all the stories published by the *Financial Times*, but for instance German *DPA* was the only agency that picked up the story on the 31st of January. French *AFP* wrote a dispatch about the response of the first lady to the *Financial Times*. No related stories appeared in the two North American media companies until the 4th of February: *AP* and the Miami based newspaper in Spanish *El Nuevo Herald*. The lack of information in the wires confirms that while all newsrooms knew about the story, the pressure was not in the foreign press but the Mexican press that quoted the *Financial Times*. (Source: Author investigation in Lexis/Nexis)

"It is a form to support sensitive stories", he adds. For instance, one year earlier in February 2003 he published in the *Economist* a story related to a parental guide from Marta Sahagún. Cockett said that it was made a joke about it, he was poking fun about 'Martita', and it got incredible coverage in *Reforma*. He was surprised: they published the whole thing in the front page with the headline 'The economist says that Marta annoys Mexico'¹³⁰.

These ideas reflect that some Mexican media do not completely understand British journalism style. According to Leonardo Valero, coordinator of international news at *Reforma* newspaper, the story about the first lady in the *Financial Times* was a good story with a global panorama.

"They (the FT) talk about Marta in the headline and the first paragraph, but in the body of the story they construct a very consistent analysis about Mexican political groups", Valero said.

"It was not something new, but they found different angles and also covering it in depth. That is why the Mexican media picked it up. Mexicans see them as a completely Independent newspaper, saying something that is not always possible to do in Mexico", he added.

An important media analyst¹³¹ explained that the *Financial Times* is interested in the politics of Mexico, and the stability of business environment. Hence, they are interested in the subject of Marta Sahagún.

Financial Times, July 15th 2004



¹³⁰ In the original story Cockett had said the parental guide was: not just nannyish ("The television is not a nurserymaid"), but strictly conservative. Sexual abstinence is encouraged, and the word 'condom' side-stepped. The guide not only condemns divorce outright, but makes a constitutionally dubious attack on abortion. Critics say it might as well have been written by a priest (*Economist*, February 21 2003).

¹³¹ The person asked to be quoted off-the-record.

“It was a very notable scoop for them; and picked up by all the new papers. It’s a strange case of a British newspaper that makes a huge impact in Mexico. All of a sudden everybody was talking about the *Financial Times*”, the source added.

“I can’t remember any other story in the last 20 years published in the FT that had that level of impact”, said the analyst.

Conclusions

The story by the *Financial Times* was an example of how to expose a powerful figure in a society with non-influential or unskilled local media. As a solid institution this paper was able to publish that kind of story, but Mexican media don’t have the time, ability or possibility.

But the role of the local media strengthened the impact. Foreign media can focus on angles and change the positive feedback loop, especially if local media understands them better and keeps an eye on their stories. So the model can be transformed with alternative and supplementary reporting, especially in a country where political scandals change the every day coverage and destabilize the political arena.¹³²


New flows as a result of the interaction between local and foreign mediums, can be enough to destabilize a powerful and seemingly untouchable corrupt figure in politics or in the business community. Mexican media should pay more attention to foreign reports, especially quality papers interested in Mexican politics.

This story also reflected hidden political connections, from companies like Coca Cola, other charities, and even the role of media companies.

The vast array of international topics is affected by Mexico’s importance and economic development with the contrasts of poverty, which is also growing.

Nonetheless television and newspapers can become ‘natural enemies’ serving different interests. TV defines part of the new agenda, which in this case influenced some media, but could not overwhelm the stories first published in papers. The aggressive reaction of the first lady also contributed to promote the scandal that originally was about “doubts and irregularities” and moved to “illegal finance”.

The opinion of columnists and analysts varied from most of national newspaper headlines. These editorial pages have a significant readership in local and national papers, which confirms the power of prominent journalists that can also influence papers, radio and television.

Many different groups in society were not comfortable with the behaviour of the first lady, as it was reflected in the local media. Not just NGOs, minority groups, or middle classes, but also political parties, even the president’s own National Action Party; but especially local and foreign investors and other prominent people in the international business community who moved their tentacles to use local and foreign media to attack Sahagun, especially the *Financial Times*.

¹³² It’s important to consider that after the Vamos Mexico story, Mexico was the battleground for an escalation of video scandals related to corruption of political parties promoted by the government and TV stations.

SECTION TWO
ARTICLE ONE

**Mexico in the English
papers: exotic, distant and different**



Ignorance about the developing world remains high in Britain, despite the over two million immigrants who have cultural links with other countries, said Thussu.¹³³ But fortunately Britons like to travel, every year 310 thousand¹³⁴ cross The Pond to drink tequila, listen to mariachis, and bask in the cheerful sunlight on the playas of Cancun and Acapulco; because their own sun, as the Colombian writer and journalist Gabriel Garcia Marquez says, is “shy.”¹³⁵

Historically, the relationship of these distant countries has been economic. In the last fifty years this link has endured and the cultural relationship has deepened.¹³⁶
[Complementary information in APPENDIX 1: “Cultural relations mirrored through the British press”]

This research seeks to give a general overview of the way in which Mexico is portrayed in most of national British newspapers as a quantitative analysis. Any articles incorporating the word ‘Mexico’ were chosen, whether this was part of international or domestic coverage.

The study included 318 news articles during the six-month period from December 1st 2003 to May 31st 2004. These articles were identified by Lexis-Nexis searches.

The strategy was based on a sample of one continuous week, Monday to Friday, followed by a rolling week, that is Monday of one week, Tuesday of the following, and so on. The final sample was 28 days of coverage.¹³⁷

Among the results, the coverage varies somewhat from the coups and disaster syndrome, mainly because of the richness of cultural values.¹³⁸ [See Appendix 7: “The Independent covering Mexican floods”]

The Sun, April 1st 2004

¹³³ Thussu, 1996.

¹³⁴ *Travel Weekly Magazine*, 2004.

¹³⁵ Garcia Marquez, 2000, p. 468.

¹³⁶ The Mexican government has a cultural office in London which is far more active than the Embassy.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-124.

¹³⁸ The cultural activity in Mexico during the first 50 years of last century was vast. The French writer and artist Andre Breton, the surrealist father called Mexico a ‘100% surrealist country’. Other international artists and life figures like Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Remedios Varo contribute to the colourful image of what used to be the Tenochtitlan Empire. [Complementary information in APPENDIX 1: “Cultural relations mirrored through the British press” on page 114]

The elite readership of the broadsheets is approximately 4% of the population that is around 2.3 million people. The influence of the tabloids is much higher, they reach 16% of the population.

The selection of the sample was taken from eight national newspapers that represent approximately 42% of the total readership.¹⁴² Looking for a reasonably representative sample of material, the six-month period was selected taking into account the cycles and seasonal variations that characterize the media coverage. In Britain, some of the news schedules vary according to special holidays, seasons and diary events.¹⁴³

The data was logged on the computer using software for databases and spreadsheets like Access and Excel. The analysis was done by basic calculations of appearance or frequency, using percentages to get reference points of what is most common or typical in the stories, and the relation between them¹⁴⁴

CIRCULATION OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE SAMPLE¹⁴⁵

<i>Sun</i>	3,148,958
<i>Daily Mail</i>	2,283,166
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	1,677,921
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	865,014
<i>Times</i>	623,211
<i>Guardian</i>	339,887
<i>Independent</i>	227,619
<i>Financial Times</i>	129,837
Total	7,110,045

Quantitative news values

This general analysis looks at particular content to understand the concerns of British citizens and how their knowledge of the world is collectively portrayed by the media. Some questions may guide this next detailed description of relevant content: What are the main topics and themes? How many stories are focused on domestic or foreign affairs? How do these topics compare in terms of news coverage? How much are the US and UK involved? How much does the British media follow the "coups and earthquake" syndrome? How does the coverage of different newspapers compare?

Content analysis has evolved as a part of communication research and this school remains an important reference for many authors, especially Berelson.¹⁴⁶ Then this particular research technique was also studied by social scientists like Max Weber in

¹⁴⁰ Merrill, 1995, p. 131.

¹⁴¹ Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2004.

¹⁴² The *Daily Express*, one of the most important tabloids, was not selected because of the lack of coverage: there were almost no stories related to Mexico. This exclusion provides a pithy sample of the reduced coverage. The Sunday newspapers were also excluded because they tend to cover features and more in-depth articles. Advertising, pictures and financial forecasts were also excluded, as were stories about the Gulf of Mexico related to the United States.

¹⁴³ Hansen et al, 1997, p. 102.

¹⁴⁴ Riffe et al, 1998, p. 157.

¹⁴⁵ Data from 31-May-2004 to 27-Jun-2004 (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2004)

¹⁴⁶ He defined it as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications". (Berelson, 1952. Cited by Jensen, 2002, p. 103).

1910, originally directed to the coverage of political and social issues.¹⁴⁷ By the second half of the twentieth century the method was applied to a wider range of media issues and it became a method to examine news coverage in order to ascertain the agenda-setting role of the media.¹⁴⁸

According to scholar Barrie Gunter, the importance of this technique is to reveal and understand the hidden meanings that may be conveyed by media texts,¹⁴⁹ which in this case will be identified as the different ideas of Mexico.

This is why the purely descriptive account of a text will not enable the making of any inferences about the production of ideologies or the impact on audiences, but rather only offers an overall picture.¹⁵⁰

The specific news values that match with this relationship of coverage are from Galtung and Ruge, and Stuart Allen's theoretic frames, resumed to four:

- a) Unexpectedness or events 'out of the ordinary': especially with the exotic part in broadsheets and accidents in tabloids;
- b) Composition: mixture of different kinds of events as a 'news hole' to be filled;
- c) Reference to elite nations: the hierarchy of events. Mexico was quoted in all sections, but mostly the stories were focused on two or three, and not international. In relation to the US;
- d) Reference to elite persons: especially exotic characters or places of the Mexican culture, and sporting celebrities.¹⁵¹

In the absence of unexpected events, Mexico is for Britons not a country, but a resort for leisure and spare time and sometimes an emerging market. This is based on the 'composition' news factor and lots of space to fill with features and tourism stories sections full of advertisement.¹⁵²

For instance, an editor would not pay as much attention to a story about Mexico than a British one: If there are already many foreign news items, the threshold value for a new item will be increased.¹⁵³ Using these criteria researchers gauge what they call news worthiness.¹⁵⁴

Historical review

People from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will not have forgotten Cuetzalan the little town in Mexico where six British military cavers were trapped in a flooded cavern in March 2004.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷ Barrie, 2002, p. 220.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Galtung-Ruge, 1970, p. 265.

¹⁵² Galtung, 1970, p. 264.

¹⁵³ Galtung, 1970, p. 265.

¹⁵⁴ Galtung-Ruge, 1981; Allan, 2002; Bell, 1991; Jensen, 2002; and McQuail, 1977.

¹⁵⁵ They were rescued eight days later and then detained by the Mexican government accused of scientific exploration and foreign military exercises.

The only reference about Cuetzalan in the British press was 10 years ago, in the *Mail on Sunday*. It was a review of how beautiful this place was for tourism. The coverage and description of that sacred city was about the incompetence of the Mexican authorities.¹⁵⁶

This was the only event in Mexico covered in depth by most of the British national newspapers during the six months of this content analysis.

In the coverage of Mexico in the US media there is little real coverage of each other's high-end culture, creating a significant gap for understanding the other, said journalist and academic Rossana Fuentes-Beraín editor of the magazine *Foreign Affairs en Español*.¹⁵⁷ We can equally equate the UK's coverage regarding these points.

Similarly Maria Martin, founder of National Public Radio's Latino USA, witnessed the US coverage of Mexico revolving around the "Holy Trinity" (drug trafficking, corruption, and immigration) which perpetuates stereotypes and misses a wealth of other possible coverage.¹⁵⁸

This begs a question: If the media in the US, which has some cultural links to Mexico cannot explain and inform accurately, what chance does the British media have to portray it better or similarly?

That is why Latin America receives a smaller amount of coverage in the British media than, for example, Asia or Africa¹⁵⁹ and explains the needs for qualitative or quantitative content analyses. Four important studies refer to the qualitative content of the coverage of foreign stories in British media.

1. Analysis of newspaper content, a report by Professor Denis McQuail in 1977.
2. The so-called "McBride report" in 1980.¹⁶⁰
3. The study of UNESCO about foreign news, published in 1985 that compares foreign reporting in twenty-nine countries.¹⁶¹
4. British newspaper coverage of Latin America: a content analysis of the *Times* and *The Guardian* in 1990, by Mariana Arraes de Alencar in 1992, a dissertation undertaken at Cardiff University.¹⁶²

The first study by Professor McQuail in 1977 found that 3% of coverage by location of events by continent was related to Latin America, the lowest category. (In this study Mexico is considered as part of South America). The Middle East had 10%; Asia 11%

¹⁵⁶ Damian Gorman wrote in 1984 about a hitch hike into Cuetzalan for the Thursday mini-market. "Outside, the hills had brewed a swirling mountain fog which made a ghost of every moving thing, said the reporter". In March 30th 2004 the *Daily Mail* published: One of the trapped six (cavers) claimed the group had been the victims of frustrating 'bureaucratic incompetence and inefficiency' and they had done nothing wrong".

¹⁵⁷ Latin American Program Newsletter, 2004, p. 6.

¹⁵⁸ She was analyzing what she called the 'translational' identities of Mexicans. She said also that the coverage of Mexico and of the border has grown dramatically since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994.

¹⁵⁹ McQuail, 1977.

¹⁶⁰ The report is an analytical assessment of the system of international foreign reporting and international communication system in the book *Many Voices One World* (Hafez, 2000, p. 6).

¹⁶¹ Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985.

¹⁶² Arraes, 1992.

and Africa 12%; North America 18%, and Europe (including the USSR) had coverage of 40%.

When broken down to primary reference by countries and regions within the 3% coverage of South and Central America, Mexico registered the smallest frequency (four mentions), the largest being Argentina with 27. Political events relating to domestic Mexican affairs, including conflicts, received less coverage, around one fifth of the coverage of international news.

Fifteen years later, an in-depth analysis about Latin America was done by Maria Arraes in 1992. This helps to understand the broadsheets' coverage of topics, and confirms the lack of coverage of accidents and disasters. Twelve years ago, the national identity of Mexico as a developing country was not covered either by *The Times* nor the *Guardian*. The study shows a concentration of international politics and 'law and order' news.

Academic journals about Latin Americas¹⁶³

Journal of Latin American Studies
Latin American antiquity
Latin American law and business report
Latin American monitor
Latin American perspectives
Latin American politics and society
Latin American research review

Arraes also found that the US is the most covered nation in the category of international news of papers. Coming to the present day, in the academic and educative field, Mariachi¹⁶⁴ land gets more coverage in a cultural and social perspective. For instance, in the May 2004 to July 2004 journals in Bute Library in Cardiff University, four had articles related to Mexico.¹⁶⁵

UK press: content analysis

The results show that 60% of the stories that mentioned Mexico just in passing related to tourism and celebrities travelling to Mexico. The 40% resting has direct or indirect relevance in sections including foreign affairs, entertainment and tourism.

The exception was *The Financial Times*, which focused on business and government-based stories. This international newspaper represented 40% of the articles in which Mexico had a leading or secondary role. The other 60% was found mostly in the *Independent*, *Times*, *Guardian* and the *Sun*.

The broadsheets¹⁶⁶ covered equally social and exotic/tourist stories. The *Times* wrote more cultural features than hard-news,¹⁶⁷ the *Guardian* focused on social and

¹⁶³ Cardiff University Library.

¹⁶⁴ Polli Kaminski, reporting for the *Independent* described Mariachis snippily: groups of local players and singers, romantic buskers who invariably play quite badly and sing slightly out of tune, but have masses of charm. And, oh, those trousers. (Kaminski, 1998, p. 3).

¹⁶⁵ Some of them are: Media International Australia, Costco in Mexico: What struggles for a dignified life are set to be in a globalised world, No. 11, May 2004; International Journal of Cultural Studies, Punk and Globalization: Spain and Mexico, Volume 7 Number 2, June 2004; and The Communication Review, Special Issue: Latina/o Communication and Media Studies, Disrupting the Dichotomy: "Yo soy Chicana/o" in the News Latina/o South.

¹⁶⁶ Excluding the *Daily Telegraph*.

human rights, especially the case of women Murdered in Ciudad Juarez;¹⁶⁸ and the *Independent* was the only newspaper that relied on news agencies with topics like foreign affairs and old and modern culture.

Mexican singer Lila Downs, mixed parentage¹⁶⁹



For instance, some of the contemporary personalities mixed with the old Mexico and the modern Mexico are traditional singers like Lila Downs, Astrid Haddad or Kinky. *The Guardian* describes Downs as a woman with mixed parentage, because her father is Scottish-American and her mother Mexican Indian, and she can switch between songs in Spanish and English, but with more of an emphasis on folk and jazz.¹⁷⁰

Number of stories by newspaper

Newspaper	Main and secondary focus	%
<i>Financial Times</i>	50	40.65%
<i>Independent</i>	17	13.82
<i>Times</i>	14	11.38
<i>Guardian</i>	14	11.38
<i>Sun</i>	11	8.94
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	7	5.69
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	6	4.88
<i>Daily Mail</i>	4	3.25
Total	123	100%

The Daily Telegraph barely covered tourism and entertainment somewhat parallel to tabloid, which drafted content from sports and entertainment subjects.

During the six months of analysis, only two stories were widely covered by British media: the cavers' issue, and the case of the woman who performed a caesarean on

¹⁶⁷ 'Hard' or 'spot' news are recognized as a staple direct of daily media (Bell, 1991).

¹⁶⁸ It is a relevant case of a decade-long murder wave targeting women in the northern city of Ciudad Juarez.

"The topic has been widely covered by most of the broadsheets in the UK because of their particular interest in woman issues", said Cynthia Prida, press officer of the Mexican embassy in London. (Prida, 2004).

¹⁶⁹ Press/promotions UK, John Crosby & Mick Bovee.

¹⁷⁰ Denselow, 2004. *The Independent* also published an interesting article about the Kinky a Mexican rock band that they define as different, because people outside Mexico other groups are getting interested in them The Strokes are fans, and so is Paul Oakenfold. Kinky are even signed to a British label, Sonic360, and their new album Atlas is attracting the same kind of enthusiastic critical approval that greeted their Grammy-nominated debut. (*Independent*, April 23, 2004, p. 17).

herself in the south or Mexico. Both were related to the 'unexpectedness' factor emphasizing the 'out of ordinary' events.¹⁷¹ Other stories were crime, Mexican migrants, the summit of the Organization of American States and the Latin vote in the US.

In relation to priority given, most published stories were in the inside pages, though 25% of them were considered as relevant and published on the "front page" or in a "section page". In half of the stories the sources were quoted directly or indirectly, and almost 20% were feature articles.

Number of stories by topic

	Main and secondary	%	All	%
Business/Commerce	28	22.76	82	25.79
Foreign Affairs	28	22.76	46	14.47
Entertainment/Celebrities	11	8.94	43	13.52
Tourism	11	8.94	17	5.35
Government	11	8.94	13	4.09
Sports	9	7.32	52	16.35
Crime/Social	8	6.50	9	2.83
Lifestyle/Culture/Review	6	4.88	31	9.75
Accidents/Disasters	5	4.07	7	2.20
Science/Tech	4	3.25	13	4.09
Other	1	0.81	3	0.94
Military/Defence	1	0.81	2	0.63
Total	123	100%	318	100%

Stories by type of article

	Total of articles	%	Main and secondary focus	%
General news	175	55.03	77	62.60
Feature article	94	29.56	22	17.89
Main news story	12	3.77	8	6.50
Editorial	16	5.03	8	6.50
Brief / Summary	14	4.40	5	4.07
Letter	7	2.20	3	2.44
Total	318	100%	123	10%

¹⁷¹ Allen, 1999, p. 62.

Number of stories by relevance

	No of stories 318	%	Main and second	%
Inside pages	263	82.70	91	73.98
Section Front Page	48	15.09	27	21.95
Front Page	7	2.20	5	4.07
Total	318	1.00	123	100%

Number of stories by quoted sources

	Stories	%	Main and second	%
Quoted directly	47	14.8	47	38.21
Quoted indirectly	22	6.92	22	17.89
Referred but not quoted directly or indirectly	49	15.4	43	34.96
Other	200	62.9	11	8.943
Total	318	100	123	100

Topics in tabloids

	Tabloids	%	Total
Entertainment/Celebrities	5	23.81	11
Sports	5	23.81	9
Tourism/Exotic	4	19.05	11
Accidents/Disasters	3	14.29	5
Foreign Affairs	2	9.52	28
Military /Defence	1	4.76	1
Lifestyle/Culture/Review	1	4.76	6
Government	0	0	11
Crime/Social	0	0	8
Business/Commerce	0	0	28
Science/Tech	0	0	4
Other	0	0	1
Total	21	100%	123

Topics and broadsheets

	Broadsheets	%	Total
Business/Commerce	28	27.45	28
Foreign Affairs	26	25.49	28
Government	11	10.78	11
Crime/Social	8	7.84	8
Tourism/Exotic	7	6.86	11
Entertainment/Celebrities	6	5.88	11
Lifestyle/Culture/Review	5	4.90	6
Science/Tech	4	3.92	4
Sports	4	3.92	9
Accidents/Disasters	2	1.96	5
Other	1	0.98	1
Military/Defence	0	0	1
Total	102	100%	123

This research mimics some of the conclusions that Arras published 12 years ago: The *Guardian* was the only newspaper that stressed the drug war, a theme included in the crime category. In relation to topics, foreign affairs, business, entertainment and sports are the main covered areas.

US-UK related stories

	US	UK	Others	Total
Stories	39	33	51	123
Percentage (%)	31.71%	26.83%	41.46%	100%

For historical reasons, the different language and the dominance of US news companies restrict the relationship between Britain and Mexico. The stories in this research are more related to the United States (1/3) than Britain (1/4), though the *Financial Times* was the only newspaper that covered business and politics in depth. They covered 70% of all business mentions of Mexico.¹⁷²

Galtung and Ruge, and Allan simplify the idea of the 'elite Nations factor' that gives priority to countries of the first world that relate to their audiences. Thus, stories from the 'third world' would only infrequently receive newsworthiness status.¹⁷³

Along with the *Guardian*, the *FT* covered domestic politics especially after January with the story that critically exposed the Mexican First lady's charity touching upon its untidy management, accounting and fund raising practices.¹⁷⁴ Excluding the *Financial Times* the most covered topics are Foreign Affairs, Entertainment/Celebrities,

¹⁷² The *FT* is considered an international newspaper and can no longer strictly be described as a British newspaper. Stephen Glover, media studies editor for the *Spectator*, said that its British circulation, which not very long ago stood at nearly 200,000, now has the 100,000 barrier in sight, but it sells three *Times* as many copies overseas as in Britain. (Glover, S. 2004, p. 29).

¹⁷³ Allan, 1999, p. 63.

¹⁷⁴ This was the main topic in SECTION 1. ESSAY 3. "Don't mess with the president's wife unless you are the *Financial Times*".

Tourism/Exotic and Sports that follow s the patterns of the ideas embodied earlier. From these stories eighty percent w ere published in broadsheets and the rest in tabloids.

Financial Times and Mexico, July 15th 2004



Number of stories by topic excluding the FT

	<i>Main and secondary focus</i>	<i>%</i>
Foreign Affairs	14	19.18
Entertainment/Celebrities	11	15.07
Tourism/Exotic	11	15.07
Sports	9	12.33
Crime/Social	7	9.59
Lifestyle/Culture/Review	6	8.22
Accidents/Disasters	5	6.85
Business/Commerce	4	5.48
Science/Tech	3	4.11
Government	1	1.37
Other	1	1.37
Military/Defence	1	1.37
Total	73	100%

Coverage of main and secondary focus stories in tabloids and broadsheets

	<i>Total coverage</i>	<i>%</i>
Broadsheets	102	82.93%
Tabloids	21	17.07%
Total	123	100%

Conclusions

The media consumer in Britain is only exposed to a limited “variety of stereotypes” about Mexico.¹⁷⁵ Their view is “westernized” focusing specially about entertainment and sports.

¹⁷⁵ Arraes, 1992, p. 3.

They influence government officials but population still remains with highly misinformed. Therefore, the variety of images about Mexico by the audience of new spapers does not match with the whole cultural, social, or political panorama.

The cultural and commercial relation may enforce a clear view of the importance of Mexico to the world. As an emerging economy, Mexico is receiving the biggest amount of finance coverage ever.

These assumptions may explain the strong criticism by Thussu of the British media in relation to their geopolitical and economic interests affect their news and that "is reflected in the way certain parts of the South are regularly covered while others are ignored."¹⁷⁶

The view of Thussu is compatible with the experts in media and researchers like Roy Greenslade, Jeremy Tunstall or Stephen Glover.¹⁷⁷ The challenges for British media are competition, 'tabloidisation' of broadsheets, and decreasing circulation, along with the "coups and earthquakes" syndrome. This situation makes coverage "suspicious" and "distorted" in terms of news values.

Hence, the advantages of a close relation to the United States and Latin America give Mexico a special value in foreign politics. For instance, the military and security category was barely covered, yet the importance is huge. Javier Ibarola, a security expert journalist states that Mexico is a 'natural target for terrorist attacks',¹⁷⁸ because the country shares a huge border with the world's biggest power, it is their third biggest oil supplier, and politically is safe enough to continue providing millions of barrels per day, specially as a non-OPEC oil producer.

The *Financial Times* confirmed this talking about oil price crisis in the beginning of 2004:

*Because of the renewed fears for the security of Iraqi oil export, Purnomo Yusgiantoro, president of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, said he would write to non-Opec members Russia, Angola, Mexico and Oman, to ask them to pump more crude after the stoppage of Iraqi exports.*¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Thussu, 1996.

¹⁷⁷ Greenslade, 2003; Tunstall, 1977; or Stephen Glover, 2000.

¹⁷⁸ Ibarola, 2003. Volkner said in 2003 referring to September 11 2001 that: terrorism has entered the global age, and thus it is no longer tied to "crisis regions" of to a particular national "space". Further attacks may happen anywhere and anytime... It seems that from now on, terrorist attacks will occupy centre stage in media coverage, their significance re-articulating otherwise familiar distinctions between particular and universal contexts. (Volkner, 2003, p. 235)

¹⁷⁹ *Financial Times*, June 17, 2004, p. 15.

Content analysis coding schedule

British press coverage of Mexico

NEWSPAPER

- 1.-Daily Telegraph
- 2.-Times
- 3.-Independent
- 4.-Guardian

- 5.-Financial Times
- 6.-Daily Mirror
- 7.-Sun
- 8.-Daily Mail

DATE-MONTH-YEAR

WEEKDAY

- 1.-Monday
- 2.-Tuesday
- 3.-Wednesday

- 4.-Thursday
- 5.-Friday

HEADLINE.....

REPORTER/AUTHOR (name and designation, if any)

NUMBER OF WORDS

TYPE OF ARTICLE

- 1.-Main news story
- 2.-Other news story
- 3.-Feature article
- 4.-Editorial

- 5.-Letter
- 6.-Brief / Summary
- 7.-Other

TOPICS/SUBJECT

- 1.-Government
- 2.-Foreign Affairs
- 3.-Military/Defense/Security
- 4.-Tourism/Exotic
- 5.-Entertainment/Celebrities
- 6.-Lifestyle/Culture/Review

- 7.-Crime/Social
- 8.-Business/Commerce
- 9.-Science/Tech
- 10.-Accidents/Disasters
- 11.-Sports
- 12.-Other

PAGES/RELEVANCE

- 1.-Front Page
- 2.-Section Front Page

- 3.-Inside pages
- 4.-Other

FOCUS

- 1.-Main focus
- 2.-Secondary Focus
- 3.-Only in passing

- 4.-Metaphor or signifier
- 5.-Other

MEXICAN SOURCE

- 1.-Quoted directly
- 2.-Quoted indirectly
- 3.-Referred but not quoted directly or indirectly
- 4.-Other

US-UK-MEXICO RELATED

- 1.-S
- 2.-UK
- 3.-None

SECTION TWO
ARTICLE TWO

Mexico: an emerging market with bad news for the world



Marshall McLuhan's global village has arrived, but the village houses are financial houses and the villagers are dealers

Jean Baudrillard, 2001

Mexico's financial newspapers and magazines provide enough information to overwhelm even the most enthusiastic reader. Since the Mexican press tends to attribute more significance to what important people say than to what has actually happened, much of what is published can be safely ignored.

Financial Times, November 20, 1992

The United Kingdom is looking to Mexico for business as old industries did with mines and railways in the 18th Century: they want to discover what lies beneath the *penacho* of the indigenous and *mestizo* society.

As a result, the British media tends to focus on financial news, rather than just nice features. But this statement has to be refined: in the 80s, it was bad news, in the 90s mostly bad news, and this century mostly good news so far.

The British can claim to be the second biggest direct investor in Mexico, of course after the United States. From the Latin American perspective, in 2003 Mexico received one third of UK investment in the region just behind Brazil with 21% against 28%.¹⁸⁰

Traditionally, the Britons were more interested in their former colonies, but they are looking at the new continent, not specifically searching for gold or diamonds, but investments, perhaps something similar.

Mexico, the ancient Tenochtitlan Empire, is considered a more attractive market than the Middle East and Far East because of its big country and enjoys economic stability. In fact is the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, with 106 million people, called by some analysts the “big brother” of Latin America, accounting for almost one quarter of its population.

In the last few years, Mexico and Brazil had jostled to gain importance in the economic markets. However, for the United Kingdom, Mexico has other important affiliations to take into account. Along with Canada, it is part of the North American Free Trade Agreement, is a member of the OECD, and the World Trade Organization.¹⁸¹

The British UK-Trade Information Centre stated that that Mexican international reserves today total US\$33,600 million and debt payments are no longer a source of much concern. Annual inflation in 2002 was below 6%.¹⁸² But more important the British identify as an important step the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Europe and Mexico signed in 2000.¹⁸³

Celtic and British investment in Mexico was the highest in the last five years, with around £600m in 2002. This was because that year HSBC Holdings, the world's second-largest banking group, bought Grupo Financiero Bital (the fifth biggest bank in Mexico) for \$1.14bn (£720m). The *Financial Times* called the operation a ‘significant step’ for commerce.¹⁸⁴

¡Cheers with Guinness and Corona!

¹⁸⁰ British Embassy, 2004.

¹⁸¹ *Expansion* (Mexico City), 2003.

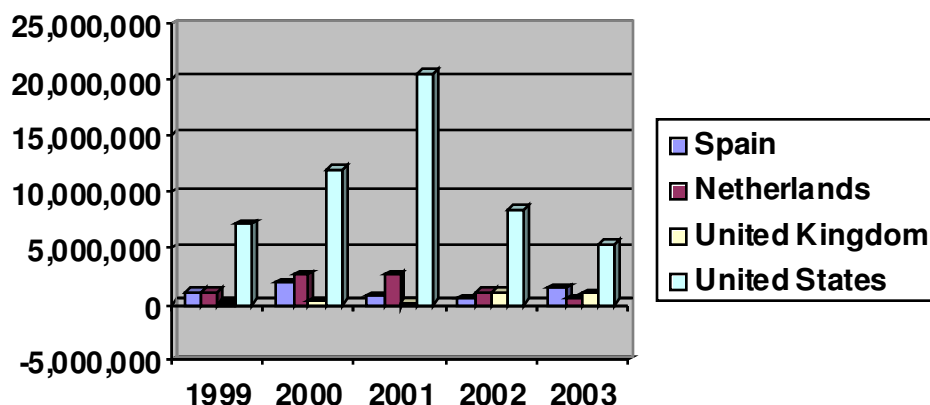
¹⁸² British UK-Trade Information Centre, 2004.

¹⁸³ Bilateral Trade Relations EU-Mexico, 2000. When the British Chambers of Commerce visited Mexico in December 2003, the promotional handout ranked the Mexican economy as number nine, and its eight trade partner bigger than all the countries of South America combined. [*Expansion* (Mexico City), 2003].

¹⁸⁴ *Financial Times*, August 22 2002, p. 1.

Mexico's foreign direct investment grew 10.9% in 2002 to US\$13,626m (£7,590m). But analysts considered the HSBC purchase as exceptional because it was part of the financial services segment with 97.8% of British investment that year, but just 8.6% of the total investment¹⁸⁵ and still seven times less than the US.

Foreign investment in Mexico by major players¹⁸⁶



Following the acquisition by HSBC, foreign banking groups, like City Group and Santander Central Hispano controlled in 2003 approximately 75% of the Mexican banking system¹⁸⁷. Globalisation has a fast engine: these changes came in less than 10 years since the banks started to accept foreign investment.

Diplomatic and cultural efforts are growing, for instance twelve economic missions in 2003,¹⁸⁸ and in April a new political agreement created a Group of Friendship with the United Kingdom;¹⁸⁹ the number of scholarships for Mexicans to study in the UK was for the first time in 2003 similar to the number in the United States.¹⁹⁰

In 2003, Mexico attracted the biggest chunk of foreign direct investment in Latin America, beating Brazil. The outlook of the Mexican government for the next year is optimistic: it predicts US\$15,600m in FDI, which is 45.4% over 2003.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Paramo, 2003.

¹⁸⁶ British Embassy in Mexico, 2004.

¹⁸⁷ Blazquez, 2004, p. 298.

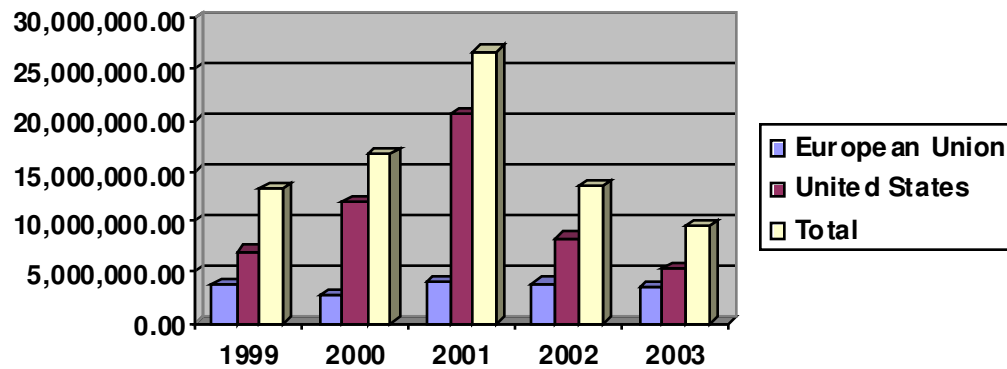
¹⁸⁸ *Expansion* (Mexico City), 2003.

¹⁸⁹ The group is formed by 10 federal legislators from the Chamber of Deputies, with members of the three main political parties in Mexico, PRI, PAN, and PRD. (British Embassy in Mexico, April 2004).

¹⁹⁰ In 2003, the Mexican government sponsored 792 students in British higher education institutions; the UK is the second largest recipient of Mexican students abroad after the US. The British government and private institutions also sponsor around 80 students with Chevening Scholarships. (Mexican Embassy-Cota, 2003)

¹⁹¹ *El Economista*. (Mexico City) 2004. In 2001, even a website was launched, through which the two governments inform companies how to develop their business. (Mex Brit Business, 2004)

Foreign investment in Mexico¹⁹²



In the middle of 2004, the British government expressed the will to increase the commercial relationship with Mexico, but with two conditions: reforms in the telecommunications and energy industries.¹⁹³ The most popular sectors are banks, pharmaceuticals, food and drinks.¹⁹⁴

In 2000 and 2001, three major rating agencies, Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch IBCA assigned Mexico an investment-grade rating in its long term foreign currency debt.¹⁹⁵ This means low country risk: the investors' obsession.¹⁹⁶

The success of the 'rating grade' was because of changes in export and production structures, a healthier external financing, a sustainable fiscal policy, a low level of foreign debt, and the end of the political cycle in year 2000 with a new government.¹⁹⁷

This was good news for foreign investors and the image of the Mexican government worldwide, but for sure it was not for the 50 million of poor people in the country.

Offices: Mexico and United Kingdom¹⁹⁸

United Kingdom	Mexico
Mexican Embassy BANCOMEXT (Mexican Embassy Commercial Section)	British Embassy British Consulate in Monterrey

¹⁹² British Embassy in Mexico, 2004.

¹⁹³ *Reforma* (Mexico City), 21 Jun 2004.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁵ Blazquez et al, 2004, p. 297.

¹⁹⁶ According to an analysis by Blazques and Santiso, "The emerging markets are economies with a higher level of risk, and so their borrowing in the international capital markets generally carries a penalization known as country risk" (Blazquez et al, 2004, p. 297).

¹⁹⁷ Blazquez et al, 2004, pp. 297-307.

¹⁹⁸ British Embassy in Mexico, 2004.

Mexican Embassy - Consular Section Anglo-Mexican Society	British Trade Office in Guadalajara British Mexico Chamber of Commerce British Council Anglo-Mexican Foundation
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Freedom of Tlatoani¹⁹⁹-empires

In Mexico, in the mid-80s, the financial markets started developing, stock markets rose rapidly, the foreign debt crisis had just passed, and new agencies like *Reuters* decided to establish a small financial desk in Mexico with one or two reporters to cover finance news in Spanish.²⁰⁰ (See APPENDIX 5: “1867: *Reuters*’ first dispatch about Mexico”)

After a process of around 20 years of opening Mexico, there are still barriers to brake down: British journalists interviewed in Mexico City criticize the number of times that top businessmen refuse to talk to them. This is not new. *The Economist* published a long article of complaint in 1997:

“The typical Latin American firm remains a hierarchical dictatorship in which information is closely guard outsiders regarded with suspicion... The biggest business groups in Mexico, Argentina and Colombia, too, are diverse family-owned empires and continue to dominate Latin America’s private sector.”²⁰¹

According to Richard Cockett, the Mexican correspondent for the *Economist* the attitude from business man “is stupid, because they don’t understand why they are so averse to being interviewed, it’s probably in their interest to have their name mentioned”.

“My predecessor has spent three years trying to do stories about big businessman... all these guys, they think they are untouchable. I think it is the old establishment Mexican way... like the old PRI saying: you don’t come, we will issue you a press release occasionally, and that’s all you need to know “, he added.²⁰²

Ronald Buchanan agrees. He is an Irish-Mexican journalist who has lived in Mexico City for 18 years and has reported for the *Financial Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, the *Guardian* and *Daily Mail*. He gives an example: I cannot remember ever having seen a picture in the press of Jorge Larrea, from Grupo Mexico.²⁰³ He admits that there are only two people with a high profile: Azcarraga Jean, Mexico’s media monster, and Ricardo Salinas Pliego, owner of *Azteca TV* and Unefon mobile phone Company.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Considered a chief in the Aztec empire.

²⁰⁰ Cardenas, 2004.

²⁰¹ The articles explain that the logic of the family business and of protectionism combined discourages growth through specialisation, which might have led such firms to conquer foreign markets and become multinationals in their own right.” (*Economist*, December 6 1997, p. 57).

²⁰² Cockett, 2004.

²⁰³ The third largest copper producer in the world.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Buchanan asserts that once he saw a story about Salinas Pliego having fraud problems in the US, and it was only published in the internal pages of the new papers. "In Britain, it would be in the front pages", he said.²⁰⁵

Lexis/Nexis research shows that Buchanan was right. Mexican new papers did cover it, but amazingly not all of them on the front pages: *Universal* and *Reforma* both published it in the finance sections. Only *La Jornada* new paper published it on the front page, the next day.²⁰⁶

Second, *Reforma* does not have that syndication service and published the story the day after, but the coverage over the following months was much more complete than that of *El Universal*, *Milenio Diario*, or *Crónica*. By February 26th *Reforma* started publishing related stories on the front page; *El Universal* never did.

The experience of Cecilia Cardenas, former editor of *Reuters* during that time was also difficult: "We had to wait years to get an interview with an important businessman", she says. They used to receive typical answers from the secretary like 'el licenciado no está' –the boss is not in the office. It was a lot of bureaucracy, from one story to another, and the story they had scheduled "was dying".²⁰⁷

Mexican companies do not have an open culture, said Ignacio Catalan director of *El Universal online* with a long experience in finances. "Some of them are very big companies and follow the stock market parameters, and others are very small and don't know how to deal with media; but most of the times this is just because they are family businesses."²⁰⁸ Public Relations companies give information – openly or covertly – to influential columnists, but not to editors or reporters, he adds.

One of the well known exceptions is Carlos Slim, a pioneer with Grupo Carso, a conglomerate run by him, described by the *Economist* as "a buccaneering Mexican stockbroker with good political connections who has specialised in

²⁰⁵ That story was published in the *Financial Times* in February 2nd 2004 saying: US regulators are preparing fraud accusations in a case involving Mexico's TV Azteca, the world's second-largest producer of Spanish language television programmes, and Ricardo Salinas Pliego, the group's chairman. (*Financial Times*, February 2 2004, p 9).

²⁰⁶ Author's investigation. It's important to consider that *El Universal* has a syndication service with the *Financial Times* and published the story the same day in the finance section (February 2nd 2004) and the by-line carried the names of two reporters: Adrian Michaels in New York and John Authers in Mexico City [*El Universal* (Mexico City), February 2 2004, p. 26].

²⁰⁷ Cardenas, 2004.

²⁰⁸ Some of the attitudes of family business are towards what The *Economist* calls 'diversification of family business', as a response to foreign-exchange controls or import barriers, which gave them great advantages over publicly owned companies, to take decisions more quickly and be more flexible. The cause, the British magazine says, is an ineffective legal system, and the consequences are that firms dislike dealing with out-siders because they fear they will not be able to enforce contracts. (*Economist*, 1997, p. 57).

buying undervalued or under managed businesses.”²⁰⁹ Other moguls do not appear even in the Mexican media.²¹⁰

It is also important to consider “private power” can control the press. The Mexican journalist Raymundo Riva Palacio gives two examples in book about the Mexican media. In 1985 during the Miguel De la Madrid government, when Carlos Salinas de Gortari was Planning Minister, he prohibited banks to sell advertisement to *El Financiero* newspaper because of the critical coverage. But amazingly the media could afford it and developed new private funding.²¹¹

The second is a famous case, when Canal 40, an independent TV channel in Mexico City, that in 1997 broadcasted a story about sexual abuse by Marcial Maciel, the founder of the religious order Legionaries of Christ, one of the most influential Catholic orders in Mexico.

The channel not only received pressure from Ernesto Zedillo’s government at that time, but was subject to an advertisement boycott by Bimbo Mexico’s top bread maker, and Pulsar Group, a private holding company. Canal 40 was so commercially damaged, that still in 2004 it cannot pull through economically.²¹²

Globalization and media conglomerates that arrived to Mexico in the 80s and 90s helped to open financial information. But at the same time, democracy and freedom of speech advanced with violent events that marked the country and involved political parties, NGOs and society. Then another battle was starting with big local and foreign companies that controlled the industrial and commercial system and influenced deeply the mass media.²¹³

From promises to crisis

In the beginning of the 1990s, in the eyes of the Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, it was not a misfortune to be neighbours of the United States, but an opportunity,²¹⁴ even though historically both countries were always dependent and culturally distant. [Complementary information in APPENDIX 2: “letter to the editors: (Our) America is not the United States”]

“Mexico was becoming more transparent, and the government had to follow the rules of globalization of the IMF and the World Bank”, Cardenas said.

But still financial information for journalists was scarce. For instance, Mexican journalists could only know the amount of international reserves twice during the year, explained Cardenas. The *Financial Times* even wrote in 1992 a

²⁰⁹ *Economist*, December 6 1997, p.57.

²¹⁰ Some of the untouchable are: Lorenzo Zanbrano from Cemex; Jose Antonio Fernandez Carvajal, from FEMSA; Carlos Fernandez Gonzalez from Grupo Modelo; Roberto Salvo Horvilleur from Grupo Gigante, Alberto Bailleres from Peñoles, Carlos Gonzalez Zabalegui from Comerica Mexicana, and Jorge Larrea from Grupo Mexico.

²¹¹ Riva Palacio, 2004, pp. 157-158.

²¹² Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 202.

²¹³ Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 203.

²¹⁴ Aguayo, 1998, p. 36

story about the difficulty of obtaining accurate and timely financial information in Mexico, despite it being “aw ash w ith financial new spapers, magazines, new sletters, government bulletins and press releases.”²¹⁵

There is truth to this. But foreign press stories w ere barely seen in Mexico, they w ere only read by finance directors or government officers. There w as no Internet and most new spapers still used typew ritors. Officials just glanced at new s about their companies, as if reading a feature story. [See APPENDIX 9: “Mexican financial new s slump and 80s tragedies”]

During that time, development forced Mexican companies and the government to publish financial information regularly. They created a calendar of economic indicator outputs, and, for instance, inflation figures are now available each month betw een the 6th and 9th day.

For President Salinas and his retinue, Mexico had to be part of the w orld markets, tackling its economic crisis, and guaranteeing social justice and (maybe) democracy,²¹⁶ according to Sergio Aguayo, a Mexican expert in Mexican-American relations and international issues.

The ‘how ’ did not matter. Under the flag of progress, there w as no holding back Salinas’s corrupt government. For instance, the new leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) lost 600 militants and supporters, most of them assassinated,²¹⁷ and many fingers pointed at the government.

And then the shadow fell: 1994 w as one of the w orst years in Mexican history. On the first of January, NAFTA came into effect, and Mexico w as supposed to become a first w orld country. An indigenous rebellion started in Chiapas and the candidate of the official party w as assassinated. In July a new government w as elected, and in December the grotesque crisis affected the financial markets: an economic crisis ground the country to a halt. “That has made us more dependants on the US, and simultaneously society changed and the political system w ith it,”²¹⁸ said Aguayo.

The crisis had w idespread ramifications; it didn’t just affect the government and companies, but also families and small investors. So the government had to hold most of the Mexican banks to rescue them, as Catalan explain: It w as a real drama to w rite the front pages of the new spapers, people that lost their houses, their cars, and their w hole w ealth. From 24 banks, just four survived.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ According to the FT, government information is not accurately reported and company statistics are often extremely misleading. It mentions institutions like Institute of Geography and Information or the Bank of Mexico, because it “has the infuriating habit of not saying publicly and well in advance when its figures are to be released, nor can it then be relied on to stick to the date... It does not even advise its subscribers when its monthly indicators are ready “. (*Financial Times*, November 20 1992, p.5).

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Reforma* (Mexico City), November 3 2000.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Catalan, 2004.

The crisis in December 1995, the so-called 'Tequila effect', touched most of international financial markets, and forced the United States to react, said Catalan. The *Guardian*, in maybe one of its first ever business stories about Mexico, explained it clearly:

"The collapse of the currency dramatically increases the chances of a moratorium on Mexican debt repayments, just one month after President Clinton moved to raise a \$50 billion international loan package precisely to avoid such a default."²²⁰

Ironically, this international impact confirmed that Mexico had an important place in the financial world that along with Brazil, was one of the countries with the biggest debt. "The crisis has had devastating effects, including massive migration to the US, crime, more poverty, and of course the losses incurred by US investors in Mexico", added Catalan.

In that year British media's tales in Mexico were strengthened. Papers like *the Economist*, which had a freelance reporter in Mexico, set up a permanent correspondent in 1994. The same year *Reuters* decided to launch a new financial service for the Mexican media, complemented with general news. No more exercises of folkloric whimsy:²²¹ this was serious stuff and now the office now has about 15 staff, among them Britons, Mexicans and Latin Americans.²²²

Another concern for 2004

The questions and critiques about finance reporting recalls the debate about news agencies as agents of global corporations and international economic exchanges, as well as the 1970s UNESCO academic discussion on communication.

As Michael Bloomberg said when he launched the news service in 1990: money is emerging as the biggest story after the collapse of Communism.²²³

In 2001, US reporter from the Washington Post extended the discussion in a critical book about Wall Street analysts and news providers: Financial analysts, and certain online and print reporters, can "move markets" the way only analysts were able to do in years past...they often traffic in rumour, speculation, and misinformation that hit the market at warp speed.²²⁴

The esoteric relation between diplomatic offices and foreign news dispatches has always been doubtful. Nevertheless, in the late 80s, financial reporting was progressive in its own way because media companies were among the first to prise out information about companies and present the financial market

²²⁰ *Guardian* March 16 1995, p. 12.

²²¹ Knight, 1992, pp.99-144.

²²² With Salinas pushing for a modern economy, economic news was an everyday reality, with advances in telecommunication, competition and privatisations.

²²³ Bloomberg, 2001, pp. 77-84. Cited by Batram, 2003, p.391.

²²⁴ Kutz, 2001.

to the public. [Additional information in APPENDIX 91: Mexican financial news slump and 80s tragedies" on page 152] During that time also NGOs and Universities started analysing the ethics of media companies, foreign and national, and their bias towards their 'hidden' interests.²²⁵

Mexican journalism coverage is mostly political, but the "technocrats" era in the 80s and 90s is not over. Vicente Fox, the conservative President from the National Action Party, has more businessmen in his cabinet than politicians, which confirms that the economic model created in 1988 continues.

On the other hand, foreign investment is "hot money", and the companies involved gain proportionately more profits in Mexico than in Britain, although they unfortunately often they repatriate most of it to 'the island' or invest them in another country.²²⁶

It is said that foreign investment brings new technology to developing countries, but it also brings executives and suppliers to just take advantage of working conditions. With NAFTA in 1994 for instance, Mexico agreed that national companies would not be protected any more against foreign investment.²²⁷ They do not invest to create jobs, but wages. Mexico can export more, jobs are created and production increases, but the worst thing would be to underestimate the risks for over 100 million Mexicans.²²⁸

According to Blazquez and Santiso the new political situation of Vicente Fox is creating governability difficulties in the country that require further structural reforms. These problems are significant but not bad enough to cause a deep crisis.²²⁹

Most British correspondents agreed that social issues get less coverage, they admitted that they would like to write more stories about indigenous populations, drug trafficking, crime, and of course wealthy and obscure businessmen.

Octavio Paz, the Mexican literature Nobel prize-winner predicted it almost 20 years ago in Oslo, when he received the Sigbjørn Obstfelder Award at an International Poetry Festival. Interviewed by the *Financial Times* he stated: You all believe Mexico is a part of the Third World. I don't see any Third World. What do Argentina, Senegal, India and Angola have in common? Neither culture, nor language nor political institutions. Latin America is an extension of the Western world just like the U.S., just going in its own direction.²³⁰

²²⁵ Magazines and newspapers have also fought for freedom of speech since 1976 with papers like *Excelsior*, *Proceso*, *El Financiero*, *La Jornada* and lately *Reforma*. In 2002 the Mexican government and many civil associations succeeded in passing a historic freedom of information law. (*El Universal*. Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 78).

²²⁶ Agenda Política de México, 2001, p. 108.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

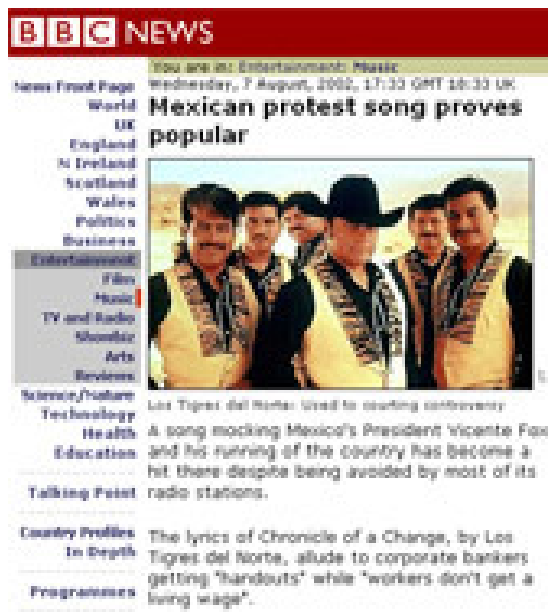
²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Blazquez-Santiso, 2004, p. 310.

²³⁰ *Financial Times*, August 6 1985, p. 7.

SECTION TWO
ARTICLE THREE

British correspondents in Mexico: Covering a wild country



A song mocking Mexico's President Vicente Fox and his running of the country has become a hit there despite being avoided by most of its radio stations. The lyrics of Chronicle of a Change, by Los Tigres del Norte, allude to corporate bankers getting "handouts" while "workers don't get a living wage".

BBC World, Wednesday, August 7 2002

Around 15 British correspondents report in Mexico as full time staff. Half of them work for *Reuters* news agency and the rest mainly for newspapers and magazines.

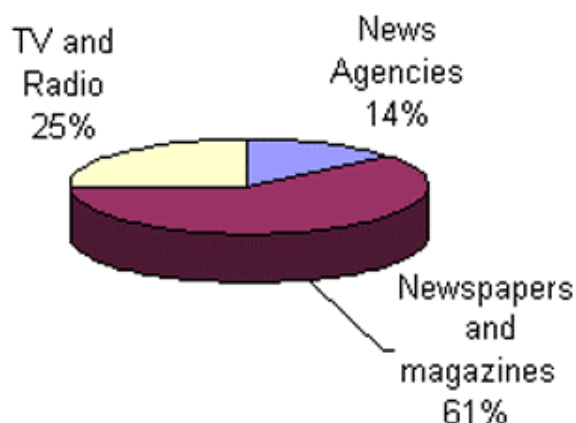
Most of them report for North American audiences and the stories are focused on the relations between Mexico and the United States, and how local issues can affect them.

They agree that Mexico is important cover from the perspective of United States, but also for its economy and folklore. However after September 11 2001 it became much less significant.

They accept that generally do not write investigative stories, find it very easy to cover features, but difficult in business and politics.

Most of them are also Central America correspondents who travel around the continent, and a few also write about the Caribbean.

Percentage of foreign media offices by area²³¹



They consider Mexico a bureaucratic country and believe that one of the biggest problems that remain is access to information.

The freelancers work for various media companies, especially British and North American. Most of them have the feeling that they are protected by the infrastructure of big companies, but others, especially freelancers, do not feel safe.

Foreign correspondents in Mexico by country²³²

Country	News Agencies	Staff	Newspapers and magazines	Staff	TV and Radio	Staff	Total Staff

²³¹ Mexican Government Media Directory, 2002.

²³² *Ibid.*

United States	6	26	34	57	15	50	133
United Kingdom	1	29	3	6	4	8	43
Spain	1	7	9	10	2	4	21
Germany	1	4	4	4	2	8	16
Japan	1	3	6	12	0	0	15
France	1	7	2	2	1	1	10
China	1	6	2	2	1	1	9
Italy	2	4	0	0	0	0	4
Total	14	86	60	93	25	72	251

Structure

The British media has approximately 40 correspondents working in Mexico for TV, radio and print media, and more than half of them are Mexican and Latin American journalists. They represent around 17% of the whole crew of foreign correspondents; and, after the United States, represent the biggest second staff.

Reuters has the biggest single bureau with around 25 staff members, while *Financial Times* has three and *BBC World* in broadcasting has two. Regarding the United States contingent of *New York Times* and *Washington Post* which have two correspondents each, the Texan newspaper, *The Dallas Morning News* has five correspondents, the largest staff in Mexico.

As the next chart shows, North American media overwhelms the number of correspondents in Mexico, together comprising half all foreign correspondents. The United Kingdom is second and Spain third.

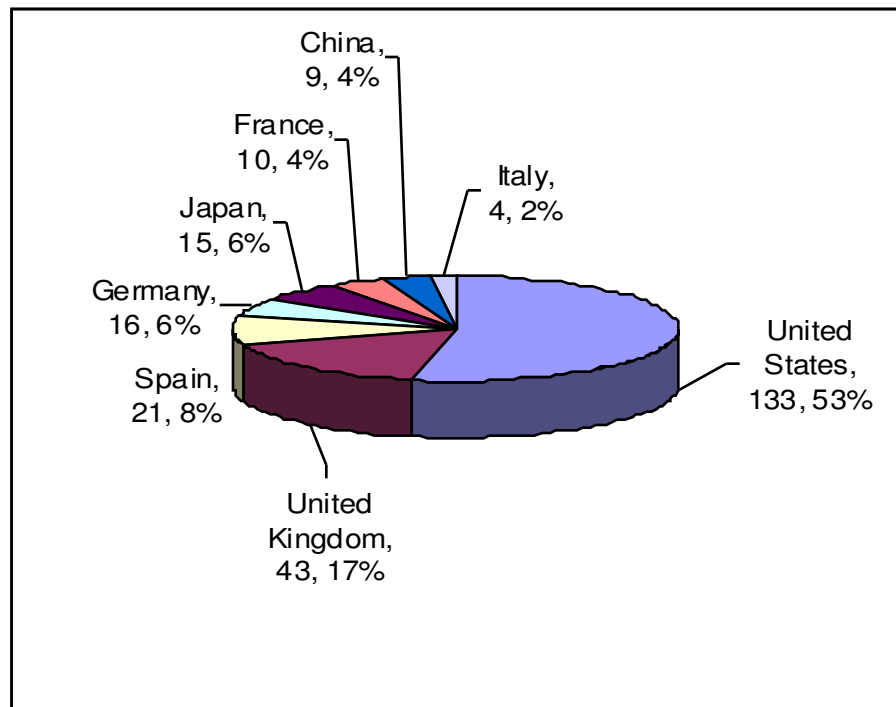
The *BBC* has one correspondent for the World Service and one assistant that reports for its Spanish service in radio, and the webpage *BBC Mundo* with syndication with around 50 radio stations.²³³

Compared with North American companies, there are eight people with *CNN* (Spanish and English service), seven for *Univision* and nine for the Spanish TV channel *Telemundo*.

Staff and percentage of reporters by country²³⁴ (Example: UK 33 staff, 17%)

²³³ This is the only institution that reports in Spanish since 1938 and most of the staff are in London, with around twenty Latin American journalists.

²³⁴ Correspondents from countries like Cuba, Morocco and Vietnam were not considered in the graphic.



Types of British correspondent in Mexico²³⁵

Staff members	From British based companies working full time.	
	From British or North American companies working part time.	
Freelances or stringers	1.-Super-stringers	May be full-time or nearly full-time people who are often paid for a minimum of around 150 days a year
	2.-Percentage stringers	Assumed with their media to be 30% of a full-time who write once a week
	3.-Freelancers	They write occasionally or covering other reporters on holy days.
Visiting correspondents	Who travel to the country to cover an extraordinary event, or a particular feature. They arrive in Mexico, often from the United States or the South American bureau, but if the event is relevant they send them directly from Britain.	

Other media like the *Independent*, *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *ITV* and *Sky News* have freelance journalists or correspondents in the United States that eventually cross the border.

Most of the media institutions report from Mexico City, and just a few are in the northern industrial city of Monterrey.

The exceptions

Only international British media has a particular interest in Mexico, despite the fact that they are not strictly considered British, and whose markets are largely in the United States. Those are the *Financial Times*, *Economist* and *Reuters* and have the tradition to cover the world much more comprehensively

²³⁵ Tunstall, 1997, p.347.

than other media. The main reason is that as they have permanent staff, and their media has a place to fill in their stories in sections. For instance the *Financial Times*, writes on average one story a day about Mexico.

Foreign circulation British newspapers 2004²³⁶

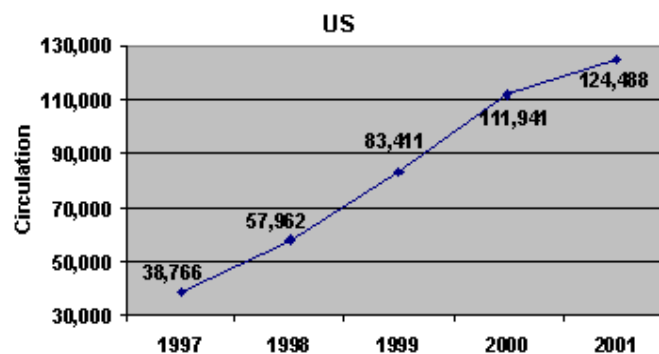
Newspaper	Total	Other countries
<i>Financial Times</i>	131,763	289,416
<i>Sun</i>	3,378,306	101,580
<i>Mirror</i>	1,816,908	75,222
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	860,368	44,613
<i>Guardian</i>	328,449	42,680
<i>Times</i>	614,378	36,070
<i>Independent</i>	228,473	33,613
<i>Scotsman</i>	65,055	14
<i>Herald</i>	76,548	6

The *Economist* sells round 80% of their magazines outside the United Kingdom and half of the whole circulation in the United States.

In the case of the *Financial Times* some two-thirds of this circulation is now outside of the United Kingdom and is printed in 22 cities worldwide. Of all foreign editions of British quality newspapers, the *Financial Times* sells 64% and the rest 36% combined.²³⁷

They have much more influence in the United States than in Mexico, and compete directly with North American media. For instance, since 1997 the *Financial Times* launched a US Edition and its large coverage of Mexico competes with the *Wall Street Journal*.²³⁸

Financial Times' circulation in the United States²³⁹



²³⁶ Total circulation of 446,412. Audit Bureau of Circulations, Aug. 30 2004.

²³⁷ The *Herald* and the *Scotsman* were not considered in the graphic.

²³⁸ The company has 500 journalists, of whom more than 70 are based in North America. In the last six years, the FT has quadrupled its North American circulation, growing from 37,000 to more than 140,000. That is, in the US alone, more than the circulation in Britain. (Pearson.com 2003).

²³⁹ Pearson.com, 2003.

Topics

British correspondents largely cover Mexico from the perspective of the influence of the United States with its neighbour, and most of them are specialized in business. They generally recognise that they are not interested directly in social issues, with the exception of the *Guardian* and the *Independent*, unless they are affecting investors' decisions.

Drug trafficking is also considered as an important topic, because of the magnitude of the problem and its relation to the United States. Beyond this, just the four international media institutions²⁴⁰ tend to follow domestic politics, even internal elections of the main political parties.

They evaluate and keep an eye on the presence of Mexicans in the United States and the way they affect the most powerful country in the world, but do not cover migration issues in depth.

They also tend to cover just two cities: Mexico City and Monterrey, and report stories that come time after time, like *Día de los Muertos* in November 2nd, the Zapatistas anniversaries every January 1st or the behaviour of the North American spring breakers in Cancun.

They all accepted that they would like to cover other topics, like the indigenous people, local politics and women, and look for different business stories to see how Mexico has changed in the ground, "not just on the sky".

Access to information

Most of the correspondents agree that Mexico is a very bureaucratic country and do not trust the press officers, because some times their information is 'somewhat disingenuous'. They all recognise that the government seeks to keep a hold over information, though some times is just inefficiency.

The two financial papers have direct access to the key figures in politics, such as the President and Ministers.²⁴¹ They will also interview seldom many Mexican and international market analysts, columnists and academics specialized in business and finances.

They dislike the state's preferential treatment of the most important media staff rather than freelancers.

They define Mexican government as hierarchical where nobody dares to say something unless through a press officer. But agree that have to follow some tricks of Mexican journalism, like the importance of getting the mobile number of officials so that they can call him directly, instead of going through the barriers of a press officer, PR Company or secretary.

²⁴⁰ *Financial Times*, the *Economist*, *Reuters* and *BBC*.

²⁴¹ For instance, the *Economist* organizes every year a forum called *Economist* Conferences. They are highly interactive meetings for senior executives seeking new insights into important strategic business issues since 1956. The last one in Mexico in June 2004 was called the 14th Roundtable with the Government of Mexico, *Reform, growth and rule of law: Mexico can't wait*.

Most of them witness not to being subject to pressures with Vicente Fox's government, with the exception of the *Financial Times* and the stories published about the first lady in January 2004.

But they know many stories about harassment and expulsion of reporters during the 70 years of the PRI regime.²⁴² Most of them considered that the crisis of the system, the new government and the media are all largely legacies of the PRI era.

Predictably they all know each other, and keep in touch and have a close relationship, and most of them have relationships with Mexican journalists and create an established network of sources.

Mexican journalism

They believe that Mexican journalism is very difficult to understand because of the complex style of writing it often as impenetrable, and assuming a vast amount of knowledge.

According to freelancer Ronald Buchanan, who has lived in Mexico for 18 years has in-depth the knowledge of Mexican media, is surprising the reverence to important people in their language. He explains that newspapers are written for a select number of people: "They have a kind of litany. In Mexico journalists would say '*el presidente de la republica*' –the president of the republic – while in the US they say 'President Bush', but in Britain we just say 'Mr Blair'. In tabloids they say 'Tony Blair'".

He considers media ownership an important issue because "you just don't need to know who owns the newspapers, but also what kind of business does the owner has."²⁴³

Buchanan reflects about a main point in the coverage of Mexico, that most of the best stories are personal achievement from the reporters more than their media. For instance he explains, "as far as Britain is concerned it really depends on correspondents like Jo Tuckman (freelancer for the *Guardian*), who is an active person, or they might have nobody here at all."²⁴⁴

In his opinion, newspapers like the *Guardian*, *Times* and *Independent* doesn't have very much interest in Latin America in general, they might be spurred by

²⁴² Well placed sources have talked about cases. For instance the Spanish agency EFE published a story about an affair of the spoon-bending magician Uri Geller with Carmen Romano, the wife of the president Adolfo Lopez Portillo (1976-92). The story was picked by British media and the president was on tour. Then the press officer went to the EFE bureau in Mexico City and told them that they had 48 hours to leave the country, and then sent a Mont Blanc pen. The correspondents left the country and three months later they were back in Mexico. Another story is what happened in April 2000 with AFP agency. Their staff members were kidnapped for some hours in their building in Torre Latinoamericana in Mexico City Centre. It was a group of masked people who damaged the building and their computers. Days before the agency had a tough interview with the official party candidate Francisco Labastida.

²⁴³ Buchanan, 2004.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

a natural disaster, or with a huge human interest stories, and often they send “superstar reporters.”²⁴⁵

The Economist

The *Economist* is interested in Mexico because of its economical impact worldwide. “In relation to other countries, the coverage of Mexico, the *Economist* is fairly exceptional”, says Rickard Cockett, the correspondent in Mexico.²⁴⁶

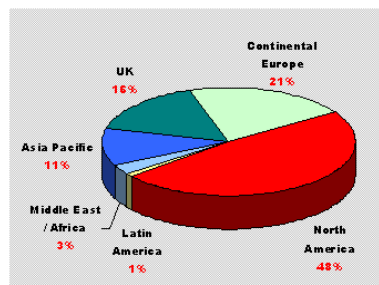
The section of the magazine called the Americas covers the whole of the western hemisphere, except the United States, the country with the largest coverage in the paper. “I have to write at least one story every week”, he says. But he accepts that since 9/11 and with the coverage of Afghanistan and Iraq, “London couldn’t care less about Latin America and all the special articles, the big articles, basically all attention is towards the east”.

“Reporting in Mexico is very good, I find politicians accessible and business very inaccessible. I found business reporting very hard, because Mexican companies are so averse to being interviewed, to telling you anything, unless you do micro business”, Cockett said.

Officials want to talk and be more open, he finds it quite easy but “it is much more accessible in Central America with politicians and companies. In the countries that are poor, if the *Economist* comes and teases them they say ‘ho my god, this is my chance!’”, he explained. He finds Mexican politicians as old fashioned people, different to the ones in Central America. Mexican officials will answer questions “but they really don’t want to have a discussion”. Contrary in Central America “they are very savvy, clever, switched on, willing to talk, much more self confident than the Mexicans, much more willing to have an intellectual discussion”, he added.

According to him Mexican officials don’t have a conception of what the press does in other countries and that the press is there to publish “their words at any time”. Cockett explains that they know that of the rulers of the world are in Washington and regard the *Economist* with considerable caution and anxiety.

The *Economist*’s circulation²⁴⁷



²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Total sales 943,721. The *Economist* circulation figures and ABC (January - June 1994-2004).

This anxiety can be explained knowing that the paper sells almost one million copies. The last figure from ABC is 943 thousand and 721 magazines worldwide; 48% of these are sold in the United States, 37% in Europe and just 1% in Latin America.

In Mexico they sell around 2,000 copies and 7,000 in the rest of Latin America. "It's very low but those people are the president, the foreign secretary, the business men, the ones that make decisions", Cockett said.

"When I'm going to interview an important officer it's quite often to hear from them a comment like 'I have a copy of the *Economist*.'"²⁴⁸

Reuters and the Cananea miners

On the 20th of July workers at the Mexican Cananea copper mine were going on strike. *Reuters* of course published the story in Spanish and in English.²⁴⁹ This story was written "thing thinking about London as long as New York", said Kierran Murray, the director of Reuter's bureau in Mexico.²⁵⁰

In his office, he opens up the story of the Cananea strike in his computer and searches in the world markets. He finds that by that time of the day –4pm, the story was highlighted in reports about the copper markets from New York, London and Shanghai:

"We have been the first to report all these developments. Every time we report there is an immediate interest in metals the markets in other countries". In his own words he explains the importance of one of the biggest copper companies in the world and how their workers could affect other markets while the story goes through the gibberish of the wire nets.

But he asks "Is that story going to get into the *Guardian* tomorrow? Probably not; but the *Financial Times*? Yes, and probably into more US papers".

He does not consider *Reuters* as a British news organization: We don't look at it from a British perspective. But certainly in financial markets and business especially in London people know there are a lot of commodities, so Mexico is important in the world market.

They started launched the bureau in Mexico in 1994, but since the 80s, *Reuters* was more than an agency that supplied information to banks and stock markets, and became an extremely important element of finance information for business specialised newspapers.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Cockett, 2004.

²⁴⁹ The text in English: Union workers at Grupo Mexico's Cananea copper mine on Tuesday postponed for a second time a strike decision by 24 hours, hopeful that talks with the world's No. 3 copper producer will end the labour dispute (Reuters, July 20 2004). The text in Spanish: Trabajadores de la mina de cobre Cananea, propiedad de Grupo México, tercer productor mundial de cobre, postergaron para el miércoles la decisión sobre llamar a una huelga, con la esperanza puesta en que de las conversaciones salga un acuerdo con la empresa. (Reuters, 2004).

²⁵⁰ *Reuters* operates worldwide in 200 cities in 84 countries and 197 bureaux. (Reuters.com)

²⁵¹ Catalan, 2004.

With the boom of the Mexican stock market in the 90s, *Reuters* placed itself in the financial sector, leaving behind the tradition of generating just general news for the media. Traditionally, one of the main areas of business for *Reuters* worldwide was the use of its computer terminals as trading tools in the stock markets”, said Cecilia Cardenas, former editor for *Reuters* Mexico from 1991-2001. But the services for Mexican media used to cover general news in Spanish with just one journalist covering financial news.²⁵²

Reuters was important in the rise of financial news in México. During the 80s, economic related newspapers were established, like *El Financiero* in 1981, and *El Economista* in 1988.²⁵³ Companies needed information and newspapers and specialised magazines were writing about business: Among the companies *Reuters* was the most experienced worldwide.²⁵⁴ [See APPENDIX 10: “Infosel: The Mexican Bloomberg?”]

In the 1990s for example, every time a new *Reuters* reporter moved to Mexico, they received informal training about the Mexican economy, and it was extremely difficult to grasp terms like “CETES” (Treasury bills) or institutions like “Conasupo”,²⁵⁵ among others.²⁵⁶

Now with around 25 staff they are the biggest news agency in Mexico and Central America. Murray says that Mexico is the number two in Latin America and the first one is Brazil, because in that country its online services is still very big:

“Our coverage helps to find what people think of Mexico, specially markets and investors, and news organisations around the world. A few stories would have a local impact, but most are financial”, Murray said.

“Mexico was until 2003 a very important bureau, and still important to business, but in news agenda terms, ‘in terms of pure news’, what’s the biggest story in the world? [The] Middle East”, he added.²⁵⁷

²⁵² Cardenas, 2004.

²⁵³ In 1981 there were no finance sections in Mexican newspapers – *Unomásuno*, a political and critical newspaper merely devoted a small section to the topic. Business was not a central element of Mexican life and newspapers like *El Financiero* had a lot of its own financial problems, even though over the years, it became one of the best Mexican newspapers. (Riva Palacio, 2004, pp. 72-73). *El Economista* was also the first newspaper to set up the figure of ombudsman in Mexican newspapers. (Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 190).

²⁵⁴ In the 70s, *Reuters* changed, trying to tilt the balance between general news towards the young managers and reporters in its economic services: a concern that journalistic standards were falling, a visceral belief among some that economic news was not real news and an unwillingness to accept the changes that became inevitable. (Batram 2003, p. 387). In 1989, the *Reuters* service in English revealed that 58% of business-news stories among 10 leading world newspaper came from *Reuters*, 21% from AP and 11% from AFP. For other news, *Reuters* was just ahead of AP, with 36% against 33%. By the end of 1980s, two-thirds of the journalists on the United Kingdom editorial reporting staff were primarily economic journalists. (Read, 1991, p. 391).

²⁵⁵ The former Mexican state food products agency.

²⁵⁶ Cardenas, 2004.

²⁵⁷ Murray, 2004.

They cover general news, politics, financial markets, entertainment and sports. Murray is particularly interested in migration issues; he considers it an evolving story. "The role of migration in changing the US as one of the most important stories". That is just one element of the relation between Mexico and their big neighbour.

But also he explains that drugs and security are important issues for the US, they want to know what is happening in the drug cartels, and is also an interesting topic for the European audience. Murray recognizes that *Reuters* do not cover political parties, though they cover a bit of politics. [Additional information in APPENDIX 5: "1867: Reuters' first dispatch about Mexico"]

BBCMundo.com

The BBC has an important presence in Mexico with radio, TV and internet, but radio remains the most influential. Since 1998 they started a campaign to attract audiences in Latin America and compete with the United States and other countries. [See APPENDIX 7: "BBC in Latin America"]

The Spanish web site of the BBC is one of the 45 foreign language websites, and since 1999 informs with a 24 hour news service, hiring around 15 Latin Americans and Spaniards in staff.

In the ensuing years the BBC has created a great presence in the Mexican radio landscape.

BBC Mundo covers international news, but the information about Mexico is not in depth, said Miguel Molina, a Mexican journalist and radio news presenter who has worked around eight years in London for *BBC Mundo*.²⁵⁸

He explains that their audience is status 'ABC' meaning politicians, university students and professionals. "Some stations use BBC to fill spaces and others because the news program *Detras de la Noticia*²⁵⁹ reports our international news "because they know the importance of the World news"²⁶⁰.

One of the goals from *BBC World* and is that they "bring (to Mexico) stories from many countries like Ivory Coast, New Guinea and Azerbaijan, that would be almost unknown by the other audiences. In the same way "our reader that does not know Spanish would have a general idea of reality in Mexico", Molina added.

According to him a correspondent in a foreign country the BBC coverage will include angles that Mexicans might miss, "it opens new possibilities for the British and Mexican audiences," he said.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Molina, 2004.

²⁵⁹ Since 2000 the BBC in Spanish signed a contract with prominent Mexican journalist and TV presenter Ricardo Rocha and his program *Detras de la Noticia* – *Behind the News*. The BBC supplied news bulletins for international news and other short programmes.

²⁶⁰ Molina, 2004.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*.

Spanish news from the English capital

For *BBC Mundo* Mexico is one of the most important countries of Latin America, along with Brazil and Argentina, said Oliver Berlau editor of The Americas section.

"Venezuela and Colombia are also important because of Hugo Chavez, the guerrillas and the drug issue respectively, and temporally we would cover Cuba, Chile and Haiti", he added.

Berlau considers the BBC as a complementary voice for Latin America and the United States: it is an independent and objective source. For instance, he explains that are cautious with the language of reporting. "We never use the word 'terrorista', we just say what happened, an attempt, or attack," he explains.

They cover mostly local politics and international relations. Some of the relevant stories covered recently are related to social issues: Mexican's in the US, the WTO protests in Cancun, security and drug traffic. In relation to politics: the coverage of Zapatistas rebellion, corruption, and the case of death women in Ciudad Juarez.

The independent *Jornada*

The *Independent* is the national newspaper with the lowest circulation in the UK, and with the biggest presence in Mexican papers. Their relation is focused in one person and one media: the acclaimed Middle East journalist Robert Fisk and *La Jornada*, national leftist newspaper.

La Jornada is one of the most important newspapers in Mexico, that considers social issues their main agenda, also tend cover widely international issues, culture and of course politics.²⁶²

La Jornada floats itself as been the voice to most critical thinkers in America like Noam Chomsky, Susan Sontag, Eduardo Galeano or Mario Benedetti, especially after September 11 of 2001. According the Editor in Chief Elena Gallegos, *La Jornada* wants a different perspective of news and they find the British media with "more independent information than North American media."²⁶³ [See Appendix 3: "US and UK news for Mexico: regulations differences"]

Back in 1990, during Gulf War, they found that Associated Press was the agency with more stories but they were not trustworthy, so they started to look for other agencies like *Reuters* or channels like BBC.

²⁶² The 20-year-old paper has among the highest circulation with a potential readership of 287.1 thousand. But circulation figures, as most of Mexican papers, is odd, but are estimated from around 40,000 to 120,000 newspapers sold in the last five years they have had high decrement in their circulation and advertisement and are suffering significant finance problems. [*Etcetera* (Mexico City), November 2003].

²⁶³ Gallegos, 2004.

"We saw that the (AP) news were reflected from the point of view of the attackers, and their sources were standardized, like the US state department or military sources", Gallegos explained.

According to her, the *Independent* and Robert Fisk have a different point of view than US media. "His chronicles are among the most read in print and in the webpage, taking into account that 60% of the visits to the webpage of *Jornada* are in the United States, Italy and France".

She adds that Fisk's point of view is appreciated and validated in Latin America, because he has something similar to *La Jornada*: credibility.²⁶⁴ From 2001 both newspapers signed an institutional relationship. Fisk's column used to be published years before, but after the new agreement "Fisk is now a correspondent for *la Jornada*", Gallegos states.

She adds that they can not compete with the infrastructure of big newspapers, like *Reforma* or *El Universal*, "but our content makes the difference, we are a left wing newspaper and our readers are people that want to be informed", she adds.

La Jornada has an advantage with Robert Fisk's articles, because in the *Independent*'s website they are not available for free, and in the Mexican paper they are. But they also influence cyberspace and his stories tend to circulate around alternative and critical web pages.²⁶⁵

In relation to business news *La Jornada* recently signed syndication with the *Economist Intelligence Unit*. "We want to have different kind of analysis, a much more accurate service about the big financial services", Gallegos said.

Se explains that the paper is trying to give a broader point of view, so that Mexican reader would have much more menu of options, especially accessible in academic areas. "The *Economist* has a different point of view than the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* or *Newsweek*", she stated.

An Independent correspondent in Mexico

Jan McGrik does not hesitate to admit that she fell in love with Mexico and Latin America during the time that she was a correspondent for the *Independent*, from 1999 to 2003.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Apart from *La Jornada*, other Mexican newspapers do not tend to quote Robert Fisk. In a simple search in Mexican newspaper database Infolatina; the results showed that between June 2003 and May 2004, the British reporter was quoted only four times: three of them in national magazines and one in the government news agency *Notimex*.

²⁶⁵ A brief search on Internet shows the influence of his stories in the Web. The articles in *Jornada* are posted in other websites especially alternative journalism, charities, non governmental institutions, and activists like: *Rebellion.org*, *Indymedia.org* or *La Insignia.org*, among many others.

²⁶⁶ McGrik, 2004.

The syndication with *La Jornada* is not the only relation of the *Independent* in Mexico, the paper has now a freelancer, but from 2001 to 2003 McGrik used to be a “super-stringer” writing around one or two stories a week.

The *Independent* does not publish a stream of stories about Mexico, but when one is printed, most of them are complete and accurate features. “Mexicans are freethinkers with a clever turn of phrase, quite unlike the mild-mannered *braceros* (wetbacks) or fiery Chicano leaders I encountered in California”, she says.

She recognises *Tierra Azteca* as a city with long tradition of being “a centre for political refugees and intellectuals, and has a lively diplomatic corps and art scene.” [More information in APPENDIX 1: “Cultural relations mirrored through the British press”]

It was her choice to live in Mexico, McGrik said, because her predecessor was based in Miami. “I thought it would be a better window onto Latin America than Miami... and report beyond topics like Castro, Haiti, Cocaine”, she added.

The newspaper interest was in Mexican trade relations with the United Kingdom and the European Union, but also some topics were very attractive, like leftists students from the National University (UNAM), the Zapatistas, as eco-guerrillas and peasant land movements, and the iniquities of the drug trade and people trafficking.

She travelled extensively covering most of 23 countries in Latin America writing news reports and features.²⁶⁷ Among the stories, she wrote this first paragraph about an embarrassing issue of Fidel Castro and Vicente Fox in April 2002:

“INAN extraordinary public spat, Fidel Castro has turned on one of his few political friends, President Vicente Fox of Mexico, ridiculing him and branding him a liar. He may even cut diplomatic relations with Mexico, Cuba's staunchest ally in the region after Venezuela”²⁶⁸.

McGrid features were colourful and personalized. One example is a text about the symbol of the *nopal* cactus: You don't eat *nopal* cactus raw. First you chop it up and boil it, and wait for the slime to emerge. The thick leaves secrete a scummy mystery juice which I don't want in my mouth.²⁶⁹

After three years the editors in London were still looking for pieces on “fluffy articles for contrast to their set pieces on the war on terror, and could only use about one third what formerly was commissioned,” she said. So it was time to look for another interesting place to cover. ☒

²⁶⁷ A search Lexis/Nexis in the *Independent* with the word, “jan mcgrik” and “mexico” from 1999 to 2003.

²⁶⁸ *Independent*, April 24 2002, p. 12.

²⁶⁹ *Independent*, October 21 2001, p. 20.

SECTION TWO
ARTICLE FOUR

Indians talking about the British media



Huichol Shamans talking to Grandfather Fire

-Hey look an English over there! You will see him with a classic bowler and umbrella, big legs and big nose, perfectly ironed clothes and walking between soldiers from 20 different countries, wrote the Mexican correspondent in London Paul Noriega describing Piccadilly Circus in January 1944 during World War II.²⁷⁰

He was covering the war for *El Nacional* newspaper and his chronicle was relating London's shining environment after Italy had surrendered.

This is a stereotypical idea of Englishmen, which reflects some sort of admiration to foreign people, an attitude called in Mexico "malinchismo,"²⁷¹ reflected in the way journalists speak about the qualities of the British media. Some British correspondents would prefer to call it "pro-European snobbery".

For instance, the Mexican magazine *Letras Libres* published in 2000 an article about the Mexican press, by Gideon Lichfield, the *Economist* correspondent during that time. He wrote about his frustrations with the Mexican press exposing the flaws of Mexican journalism, especially related to writing style.²⁷²

Lichfield concluded that Mexican newspapers are extremely boring, inconsistent figures and hence, newspapers have a very low circulation: "The idea that news (or stories) is not something that is new, but that someone important said it, even if they had said it before and without confirming if it's true or not... Stories are an excellent account of what the important person say, but they are not understandable", he said.

In an article called, *La Declarocracia en la Prensa –The Statements in the Press*, he points out that Mexican journalists attribute more significance to what it is said than to what really happened writing meters of insipid words.²⁷³

The article was praised by Mexican journalists and university academics, even in the offices of one national newspaper *Milenio*, one of the editors copied the texts and distributed it to the staff.

The idea of the British media

Most Mexican journalists interviewed for this article agreed that the British media in Mexico had a different perspective from North America, that their standards and accuracy were among the best in the world, they do not give them the importance they deserve.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ Sierra et al, 1984, p. 84.

²⁷¹ The *Times* explains "Malinchismo": something that betrays the country and degrades its traditions.

The roots of this date back to the Spanish conquest of Mexico, when Hernan Cortes used a woman known as Malinche as one of his interpreters. As a result Malinche was to become one of the most vilified figures in Mexican history" (*Times*, October 6 2000, p. 22).

²⁷² *Letras Libres*, (Mexico City) July 2000.

²⁷³ [*Letras Libres*, (Mexico City) July 2000].

²⁷⁴ There are around 20 Mexican newspapers in Mexico City and they are divided in four types: general, financial, sensationalist and sportive. In the whole country the World Press Encyclopaedia identified in 2003 around 340 newspapers.

Before year 2000, when the old party system was functioning, many of the media corporations would receive millions of dollars in advertising revenue, and many journalists' bribes²⁷⁵. After four years with a new government many papers have disappeared and others are just surviving, especially the general information ones.

Mexican journalism in the 20th century emerges from an authoritarian framework, one which the country was institutionalized in from the 1940s to the 1980s, and the press was subordinated to the regime. In the 70s some media companies had challenged it since the 70s, like *Excelsior*, *Proceso* magazine and lately *La Jornada*, *Reforma* and *El Universal*.

This repressive model was dissipated in 2000 and two new kinds of journalism emerged:²⁷⁶

- 1.-A civic-oriented model, practiced by a growing number of new papers, where journalists are autonomous, assertive and diverse in news reporting.
- 2.-Market-driven journalism, which started in the 90s, not autonomous from powerful actors, and which presents diverse views of the regime or assertively seeks news only when such behaviour furthers commercial goals.

From these two models there is a group of Mexican journalists that keep an eye on the British media. Most of them are investigative reporters, columnists and editors.

Who is who in the quoting?

Notimex is the Mexican medium with most stories about the United Kingdom.²⁷⁷ Briefly their stories about the UK follow three routes: The institutional and governmental politics like that in the Houses of Parliament and Tony Blair; the public or state related like *Reuters* and the BBC; and the media industry like broadsheets and tabloids.

According to Pilar Bustamante, the *Notimex* correspondent in London, the UK is important for Mexico because they guide the international dynamics in politics business, but also in science, art, fashion and entertainment. "With globalization you cannot be apart from international relations, and it's important to see what the world is saying about you" she explained.

She finds a big difference in freedom of information, "here the press officers reply very quickly to journalists. They have effective mechanisms".

In her words the new paper that covers Mexico best is the *Financial Times*, especially in analysis and economic forecasts. Then the *Guardian*, "they make a good coverage, they understand Latin America, but they do not emphasise analysis". Then she also identifies as important the *Times* and *Independent*.

²⁷⁵ Called in Mexico *anbute* or *chayote*.

²⁷⁶ Hughes, 2002.

²⁷⁷ The governmental news agency is in process of becoming an independent body, and has around 110 staff between local journalists and international correspondents.

During 2003 around half of the stories from Mexico City new papers related to the United Kingdom are published by Notimex,²⁷⁸ Hence, in most of new papers in Mexico. The agency also quotes British new papers regularly. For instance, during May 2003 and June 2004 the most quoted new papers were the *Financial Times*, *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*.²⁷⁹

The *Guardian* was quoted around 70 times in Mexico City new papers. Half of them were Notimex stories, and 16 from *Reforma* (22%). Most of the other national new paper published just around two or three related to the *Guardian*.

Reforma has around 17 staff members in the world, "We are the new paper with the biggest number of correspondents and in places like China, India or Jerusalem", said Leonardo Valero, coordinator of international news at *Reforma*. According to him the British media has a lot of resources and an international perspective on news. "They give a human angle to stories; they are much more originally and less strict in the style", in comparison to North American media.²⁸⁰

He is familiar with the British media because studied a master degree in journalism in the UK.

He evaluates their ability through the years to build big institutions in journalism "They are important and might have their own agenda, but there is a respect given to their stories".

"We know that they have interesting stuff about Mexico". For instance they used to receive the services of the *Economist* via syndication from the *New York Times* or the *Guardian* from the German news agency DPA. They can publish stories from them, but maybe not related to Mexico.

He adds that the two media that cover Mexico in depth are read in the United States.²⁸¹ "The stories related are in the front page of the North American edition and not in the British edition".

"*Financial Times* and the *Economist* have grown in popularity, because they have changed the reporting angles, and the other British media haven't. They have been involved in the Mexican market with the ability to identify the growing relation between the two countries", he said.²⁸²

However he points out that in general the increase of the political and economic relationship between the two countries is not reflected in the British

²⁷⁸ A simple search in Mexican newspaper database Infolatina with the name of each media from June 1st 2003 to May 31 2004.

²⁷⁹ Idem

²⁸⁰ Valero, 2004.

²⁸¹ *Financial Times and Economist*.

²⁸² *Ibid*.

media. "There is still a lot of ignorance about Mexico, they record certain details, but not processes."²⁸³

In terms of the news agency *Reuters*, Valero explains that for a daily paper they have pros and cons. "They are leaders in graphic materials, a very important way to present information, they are precise and fast".

He accepts it as very important in international news along with AP. However, recently the Spanish news agency EFE has done a very good job, but sometimes they would take their stories somewhat cautiously".

You can trust *Reuters*, he adds. "They have a commitment with accurate and fast information; they combine stories with special reports, and complement the news with extensions of the stories".

In relation to coverage *Reuters* reports "are good about Middle East and Europe, but AFP covers Europe also in depth, as does AP in North America. "But their deficiency is Latin America. They cover the area fairly well, but we are interested in regional stories".

Working with the Empire

Gaby Ruiz is a journalist educated in Britain, but has always worked in Mexico for local and international media. Now she writes for *Expansion* magazine in Spanish, a subsidiary of Pearson specialized in business and special reports. Regularly she interviews important business men in Mexico.

She recognizes that her style of reporting is very British, "I am very aggressive, and I tell my interviewees that I want them to tell me the truth and not to lie. That is difficult with some of them".

She worked for *BBC World* and has many experiences with the British correspondents. According to her it was very difficult to explain to them how things worked in Mexico:

"I learned a lot from them, but there were a lot of stereotypes, they perpetuate the idea that Mexicans still ride horses and women always use a *reboso*—veil, the arrogance to fit things as people in Britain thinks they are,"²⁸⁴ she said.

The four defects of foreign sections

Another reporter that reads the British Media is Marco Lara Klahr. He is an award-winning journalist who has written special reports for papers like *El*

²⁸³ Valero remembers an anecdote with *The Sun* staff, related to the British explorers trapped in Cuetzalan in March 2004. "When in the UK most of people were infuriated with the Mexican government, *the Sun* published a picture of them doing full Monty inside the cave. I wanted to get the picture but it was a bit late, and as the UK is six hours forward, I called *The Sun* and asked for the picture, but the person talking to me wanted to sell it at a very expensive price. So, we were negotiating about the price when on the other side the guy slapped the desk angry and said: you bloody Mexicans! you expel them and now you don't even want to pay for the picture! I told him that he worked for a private newspaper that was not part of the government."

²⁸⁴ Ruiz, 2004.

Universal and *La Jornada*. He was among the reporters who prize having interviews with the rebel voice of the Zapatistas, *Subcomandante Marcos*.

He thinks that Mexican media do not evaluate the importance of international news and foreign media. He can identify four defects.²⁸⁵

- 1.-They would not give complete coverage to stories that are not “news”, unless it was a significant juncture or when they needed to fill space.
- 2.-They would not invest money in global issues, so they resort to superficial stories from news agencies, and the reader would receive a huge amount of information and the result is misinformation for them
- 3.-If they pretend to cover an international story in depth, they would take a story from syndicated services of foreign news agencies and prominent newspapers.
- 4.-Mexican editors and reporters do not use international sources to extend the importance of their local stories.

For instance, he explained that in February 2004 he wrote in *El Universal* a special report about a religious sect in Mexico and among his best sources were foreign academics willing to talk from the University of Texas and the Social Research Institute of Sao Paulo.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ This idea complements Galtung and Ruge, and Stuart Allen’s news values theoretic frames explained in the Content Analysis essay. In this case Mexican papers appropriate the news values and adapt them to its new environment with different characteristics, with an identity by itself.

SECTION THREE

Conclusions

The view of British media about Mexico is dragged from the traditional and cultural Mexico portrayed in the 1950s. Only three 'world media' (*Financial Times*, *Reuters* and *the Economist*) have been able to identify that a new country is consolidating itself in three main areas: economical growth, democracy and recognition of minorities.

These media focus their stories on financial news, and cover politics and social issues that reflect the impact on stability and country risk to audiences who live beyond Mexico: financial markets and foreign investors.

The disproportionate coverage in terms of financial news is contrasted with *BBC Mundo*, one of the most influential media in Mexico, especially in Mexican radio with international issues, but in the website covering politics. It covers government and social issues from a British-Latin American perspective. However it is not as influential as *Financial Times* or the *Economist* in the United States.

Most of the financial media are dedicated to discovering Mexico as a tourist destination, as an emerging economy leading Latin America, and as a potential market to introduce foreign investment to the US and South America.

The 'lesser media'²⁸⁶ follow the old patterns of intermittent coverage that emphasizes culture and tourism, and are likely to describe social contrasts, apart from coups and earthquakes.

Mark Pedelty concluded after his deep analysis of the coverage of foreign media during the 80s in the civil war in El Salvador, that while reporters (including stringers) are often ostensibly free to write what they choose, in truth it is staff correspondents and their institutions that set the news agenda.²⁸⁷

*I will challenge the view that news is reported by independent, tenacious and objective journalists who function as watchdogs against the abuses of power (...) I have concluded that reporters play a relatively small role in the creative process of discovery, analysis and representation of news production. Instead, they are mainly conduits for a system of institutions.*²⁸⁸

This anthropological analysis even after 20 years is directly relevant to Mexico. In the same way, foreign media finds it difficult to recognise in their coverage that economic progress is promoted by democracy and minority recognition, not by foreign investors. Without those two forgotten sides of the

²⁸⁶ Tabloids and most of British papers, to differentiate them from the 'international stars'.

²⁸⁷ Pedelty, 1995, p. 6.

²⁸⁸ Pedelty, 1995, p. 24.

'complex Mexico' the map and the image they reflect to the world will continue to be distorted.

As photographer Robin Anderson stated: there is a big difference in consuming images rather than the freedom to shape the reality behind the images.²⁸⁹

Despite regulations, international stories in most of British media will follow the Downing Street agenda. "If the foreign office is not interested in investigating human right abuses in Colombia or Libya and reporting it to the United Nations, then it won't be covered", said *BBC* reporter Jake Lynch. [See APPENDIX 3: "US and UK news for Mexico: regulation differences"]

In the last five years, British media found in the US the key to enter to Latin American markets, a hard nut to crack over since the last 80 years. With a presence in the heart of their 'media enemy', the United States a country that has influenced the old Tenochtitlan civilization in the last 150 years. The huge increase in the circulation of the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* has made them a fundamental necessity for key decision makers in the western hemisphere.

The syndications with news wires and papers give interesting features to national papers, like *Milenio*. And direct agreement like *La Jornada* with the *Independent* will influence in an academic, cultural and social sector.

It is admirable the coverage of some freelancers or super-stringers that write about Mexico with scarce resources and low salary. They are much freer to choose and extend their stories, especially long features and news reports for the British broadsheets. But these media institutions do not influence Mexican public opinion. Then their coverage may apply more as "Culturetainment" than Infotainment.

This situation in Mexico is similar to the arrival of media conglomerates to the media scene in Britain in the 50s and consolidated in the 80s. The question is whether this advantage in the US markets will follow an agenda established by US or British interests. So, the old liberal school of the British media might be in a process of change.²⁹⁰

For instance, in spite of the intense coverage of the *Financial Times* about the Mexican first lady, that paper missed other important stories, like the electoral violence in southern Oaxaca in June and July 2004. Dozens of people were injured in armed confrontations between political groups, as analyst Luis Rubio said, because, in Mexico, "violence is also a political tool."²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Anderson (Robin), 1989, p. 105. Cited by Pedelty, 1995, p. 14.

²⁹⁰ [See APPENDIX 7: "The *Independent* covering Mexican floods" on page 148, a comment of the way the story was covered not because of Mexico but because the floods were in a small city near the border with the US].

²⁹¹ *Reforma*, August 8 2004.

The first lady affair was proved to the international media – not just British – that their coverage of politics and social issues does more than fill column inches: it also helps a population struggling to fight corruption, and promotes justice and human rights.

For instance the *Financial Times* is now monitored more than before in Mexican newsrooms, and in Sanborns, one of the biggest restaurant book-store, they started selling the paper after the Sahagún affair, previously only selling US and Spanish papers.

More than features

International media institutions are the fifth estate and will always be one step ahead of the fourth estate: local media. Thus as Negrine, Graber and Thussu said, they can destabilise national media practices. Their news, whether liberal or conservative, has the power to influence the politics of any country, defining an international or local agenda. The United Kingdom the rest of Europe and the US lead the infrastructure of international institutions, but also benefit from local media institutions with authority within their countries.

Media concentration is another important discussion. Ten years after Mexico signed the NAFTA with Canada and the United States, the idea of a free market silently penetrated Mexican industries. “A year after (the agreement), Mexico’s constitution was amended to allow foreign investment in Mexican media companies.”²⁹² No European company has gone that far.

Since that time three US companies have bought two of Mexico’s largest cable operators: Clear Channel Communications purchased a stake in a Mexican radio station group, and AT&T, MCI and others have pursued telecom services. The results now are that “cable has been a robust sector, but telecom has not gone as well”, says the magazine *Hispanic Business*.²⁹³

The cause of the complications in the telecoms industry is because the solid Mexican telephone company has resisted their attempts at leverage. During the next few years it is likely to see a terrible and aggressive battle for more influential media companies. This virgin market is to be ‘conquered’ again and again.

Mapping different Mexicos

Precisely the coverage by British media in Mexico can resume as follows. The most important features are related to the pre-Hispanic world, food, and traditions. This was generally the image portrayed by the British media until the end of the 80s. However, the most important news stories about Mexico in the last 10 years have been: the Zapatista rebellion in 1994, the change of government in 2000, and the military cavers trapped in Cuetzalan in 2004.

²⁹² Thussu, 2000.

²⁹³ *Hispanic Business*, December 5 2003.

In general terms the most important financial news is related to Mexico as a tourist destination, as an emerging economy and as a potential market to introduce investors to US and Latin America. The British media portrays Mexico as a cute monster.

The image created for its audiences is not a well-proportioned body but one with some fatty areas and others extremely thin, abandoned or just left out of the map.

Obviously the entire border with the United States is important, and the most relevant cities are Tijuana and drug trafficking issues; Ciudad Juárez and the massive murder of women; and Monterrey as the second financial centre in the country.

Mexico: A cute monster²⁹⁴



Some parts of the Atlantic Ocean make it to the map because of the paradise beaches, especially La Paz, Mazatlán and Acapulco. In the south coast of the Atlantic, foreigners will find the vibrant indigenous states Guerrero Oaxaca, and Chiapas because of the Zapatista rebellion.

The whole region in the centre, the cradle of the old Aztec empire is regarded as the most influential social, economic, political area of the country is still allowed to remain.

The south is a Mayan tourist zone, from Puebla to Tabasco, Veracruz, Yucatán, Campeche and of course gorgeous Cancun.

The desert part in the north and industrial states like Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango and Coahuila boast no exotic birds or colourful people. Not even the nomad natives that used to live there, like the Irritilas, would be attractive

²⁹⁴ Map created by the author.

enough to merit coverage. Even though the zone is a desert, in the map is deep blue.

This idea of Mexico is confirmed by *BBC* reporter and Latin America analyst Nick Caistor: not many people know the difference between Vicente Fox and the political party PRI and the British do not have an accurate picture of what happened in the country in the past 20 years.

The old curse of reporting isolated facts and not processes... 

SECTION THREE

Reflection

Journalists are used to asking questions, but not answering them. This was the most difficult part of this study, to learn what is not in the books, but what is happening now, today or last week.

The theories of international communications and social science helped me to build structures and understand process, but to work out how the British media covers Mexico, I needed to go to the newsrooms. I had to find the players in the field, and not just the spectators or commentators from the tribunes.

At the beginning of the project, some people had doubts about the topic. They used to ask me: is there really something new about it. Then searching for bibliography, through books and journals I found very helpful theories of cultural imperialism, agenda setting and propaganda. Some journals had stories about Mexico related to political and cultural areas, but not about media.

For instance, looking for the historic coverage of the British about Mexico in the XVIII century, I found that the first mention was the Mexican-American war in 1946. Famous books like *History of the Times*, *The First Casualty* or the *Encyclopaedia of the British Media* mentioned the US during that time, but amazingly Mexico did not exist, not even in the index. Finally found the coverage of the *Times* from 1846-48 in an excellent online database from George Mason University in Virginia in the United States.

The same happened with the book *The Power of News*, the history of *Reuters*. Mexico was not listed in the index, just Latin America. So I had to go to the archives of the institution to find out more. I asked them when *Reuters* published the first dispatch about Mexico and when it sent its first correspondent: "I am afraid that neither of your questions are easy to answer, John Entwistle", the group archivist answered me.

"The first news telegram from South America (Brazil) is dated 1858 and the dispatch about the death of the Emperor Maximilian in 1867. Whether the latter was the first *Reuters* dispatch about Mexico I cannot accurately say", he added.

Talking with British journalists in London and in Cardiff most of them said that the last story they remembered was the Zapatistas and the change of government in 2000: nothing else. But how could I write about the coverage of Mexico without covering it myself?

I saw major flaws in the way Mexico is portrayed, and not just Mexico but many countries, especially Latin America, the only partial exceptions being

Brazil and Argentina. As I asked and read, I found sporadic bits of information, whispering to me that they should be pieced together: there was a topic waiting for me. Moreover, I was part of it, as a journalist and as student in the UK.

Theories and analysis are always important, however I preferred to describe reality and let readers draw their own conclusions. In this particular case I realized that doing journalism about journalism from a desk and a computer, (thousands of miles away) was ridiculous. The interviews and the historic archives added weight to the relevance of this study.

Nothing is perfect. I would have liked to analyse the coverage of the Zapatista rebellion, an important part of the consolidation of Mexican democracy and civilian movements, an army that is considered more a cultural movement than a guerrilla one. At the end I had a lot of information that I should have analyzed much more carefully.

Maybe this study-report just confirms the significant increase of Mexico in the international arena, something that has already been said, but it is a topic that no one has approached, in spite of the fact that relations with the UK are growing.

I found that there is a lot of information about British media but none about their correspondents around the world, their influence in other countries, the way they live, and the media just tends to talk about them when they suffer harassment or death threats. This would be an excellent topic.

One last consideration...

I see my colleagues and me writing in bad English and talking about our beloved countries, our media, our gods and goddess. All trying to tell Western academics why our lands are important, and analysing how the British media does not care about them. Maybe this is a unique chance for us to express our concern that the complex and age-old traditions are being whittled down to merely eccentric or interesting news.

Britons have economic and political power, and are a model for Westerners about critical news values, but the world also has much to offer. Take cities like Bogotá, Buenos Aires, or Tijuana with excellent investigative journalists and war reporters. They do other kinds of journalism also with high standards, fewer resources and lesser freedom of speech.

Maybe the involuntary goal to talk about these exotic stories can help the Westerners to appreciate that, our simple and pure cultures question the quality of life of your 'advanced and technological' dry way of life. The media will never reflect reality, but fair coverage and recognition is what the third world needs for its altered development by Western international institutions, as Negrine stated: with an enormous impact on the patterns of development. That will happen only through human rights, ethnic recognition and democracy, and not just with arrival of foreign investors. ☹

Appendix 1

Cultural relations mirrored through the British press

The influence of the British culture in Mexico is huge and vice versa, especially in modern and old art. The best years were the 1930s, where the country fermented some of the best artists and writers recognized worldwide.

Examples are like pubs: Alejandro Jodorovsky from Chile, Andre Breton from France, and Leonora Carrington, Graham Greene and D.H. Laurence from the United Kingdom. A feature from the *Times* mentions more:

*Mexico was a haven for many European artists...the numerous surrealist exiles included Wolfgang Paalen, Gordon Onslow Ford and Luis Bunuel, who made more than 20 films in Mexico between 1945 and 1960.*²⁹⁵

Many British writers have been fascinated by the ancient Mexican history: the conquest and the Aztecs, Totonacas, Mayas and Chichimecas. Among the most important Graham Green and D.H. Laurence wrote historical fiction of the modern Mexico. Green travelled around Mexico for two years in the 1930s. He witnessed the bloody purges and murder of priests during the 1930s, the 'Cristero' rebellion against religious leaders that supported the Mexican Revolution in 1910, the Mexican Revolution.²⁹⁶

Green, a converted catholic, travelled all around Mexico and wrote *The Lawless Roads* in 1938 about oil expropriation. He also wrote the best novel of his career in the 1950s: *The Power and the Glory*, inspired by a mayor religious and critical father, Miguel Agustín Pro.²⁹⁷

D.H. Laurence travelled during the 1920s around Oaxaca working on *The Plumed Serpent*. A review from the *Times* says that the book "catches the spirit of the place as only genius can", and remarks on one of the most remembered gods in Mexico. One of the most famous is Quetzalcoatl, as Laurence describes:

*Quetzal is the name of a bird that lives high up in the mists of tropical mountains, and has very beautiful tail feathers, precious to the Aztecs. Coatl is a serpent. Quetzalcoatl is the Plumed Serpent*²⁹⁸.

Another reference is Leonora Carrington: the last surrealist, who has lived in Mexico and in New York, for almost 60 years. The Latin American magazine

²⁹⁵ *Times* (December 7, 1991).

²⁹⁶ *La Jornada*, (February 14 2004).

²⁹⁷ Palapa, 2004.

²⁹⁸ Lawrence, 2001.

Gatopardo managed to interview her in December 2003 in her house in la Colonia Roma²⁹⁹. She never accepts to talk with journalists because:

*Fools' names
and fools' faces
are often seen
in public places...*

She remembered this parental saying: "That's why I don't like interviews, because I'm not a fool, I don't want my name in the streets and in the newspapers".

The so-called "surrealist ghost" born in Lancaster, recognized in Mexico the thin line between the reality and imaginary:

*...It seemed to me so exotic, everything was new, from the spirit of people and the variety of food, plants and animals, even the landscape and the contact with dead people.*³⁰⁰

In the 40s, when she arrived to Mexico City, she met important cultural figures like Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Octavio Paz, Juan Soriano and of course the Spanish-born painter who moved to exile in Mexico; Remedios Varo, one of her best friends.

Another legacy from the British was the old Cornish community in Mexico in the state of Hidalgo. The *Daily Mail* wrote in May 2004:

*The Cornish flag even flies above the Museum of Culture at Real del Monte, a small town high in the Sierra Madre in Mexico. Incidentally, the locals there make the best Cornish pasties I have tasted outside of Cornwall.*³⁰¹

The story goes back to the beginning of the XIX century when a Spanish silver company was sold to the British backed Real del Monte Mining Company in 1824, after the Mexico's War of Independence. In the town, now called Real del Monte there is even a monument called El Reloj—the clock, a timepiece that chimes to the tune of *Big Ben*.

Another legacy was football. The Cornish community brought this sport to Mexico, known as the national sport. They played both cricket and football in the regional capital city Pachuca, creating the Pachuca Athletic Club, the oldest team in Mexico that still plays in the First Division.

*Mexican football was born officially on 19 July 1902 with the establishment of the Mexican League of association football that was made up exclusively of Englishmen.*³⁰²

²⁹⁹ *Gatopardo*, 2003.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Daily Mail*, 2004.

³⁰² Schwartz, 2004.

But the team was a 'British affair', with just two Mexicans playing:


...all the players in the five teams which made up the league until 1910 were British expatriates who had made their fortunes in mining and insurance.¹

However, the city of Pachuca still prides itself on being the home of Mexican football. But unfortunately the Englishmen were not the first to play a ball game in those lands, the Mayas used to have a very similar game.

According to the *Times*, the Mesoamerican ballgame, as it is known by archaeologists, probably began more than 3,000 years ago as a ritual in what is now southern Mexico, and continued until the arrival of the Spanish in the early 16th century.

The game was part of their most popular mythological characters Hunahpu and Xbalanque. 'But was it really football?' the reporter for the *Times* asks to his readers:

It was played with two teams, making it most probably the world's first team sport, and a rubber ball. The aim of the game was to keep the ball airborne by hitting it with almost any part of the body - feet being less common than the hip, elbows or buttocks. Some courts had a hoop set on one wall, and a "goal" was probably scored if the ball was bundled through it.³⁰³

But what used to happen at the end of the game? The *Sun*, in its own style explains it: some kind of ball game that ended in at least one member of the losing side being sacrificed. Footballers of today should be grateful this never caught on!³⁰⁴ 

³⁰³ Fisher, 2004, p15.

³⁰⁴ McLaughlin, 2001.

APPENDIX 2

Letter to the editors: (Our) America is not the United States

What would British editors think about this headline: "Chirac threatened, the European Prime Minister holds to reforms".³⁰⁵ How would French people feel with: "The Queen of Europe, Elizabeth II ends 50-year church tradition."³⁰⁶

Furthermore, could the anti-war Spanish society tolerate this headline: "What Tony Blair would say to God: The latest inquiry into how the Prime Minister took Europe to war can be damaging but it won't be the final verdict."³⁰⁷

These headings are not real. Despite historical and diplomatic quarrels, the texts use the word Europe as a country, and not the whole continent.

In a similar way Argentineans, known as the biggest anti-US society in the continent,³⁰⁸ would not be happy with: "America bids a final farewell to a president."³⁰⁹ Finally, what would academics of the Mexican National University (UNAM for the abbreviation in Spanish) the biggest in Latin America would say about "America is dumb and Bush is a liar."³¹⁰

These headlines are real. Despite historical and ideological quarrels, the texts use the word America as a country, and not the whole continent. They were extracted from British media, accepting by omission the semantic defect of "their America".

Historically the real name of America should be Columbia, as the Spanish used to call the new continent³¹¹ (in Spanish the word is Colombia). Don't forget that America of The Americas is the western hemisphere and consists of North America, Central America and South America.³¹²

For the Western media, especially the British, the word America is the United States or North America. Eduardo Galeano, the author of "Open Veins of Latin America", a banned book in the United States during the 70s, emphasizes the consequences:

...In a way we still lost the right to call ourselves Americans; even when they created the country, Haiti and Cuba were already countries. Now

³⁰⁵ *Guardian*, August 20 2004.

³⁰⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 2004.

³⁰⁷ *Guardian*, 2004, p. 27.

³⁰⁸ *Latinobarometro*, 2003.

³⁰⁹ *Independent*, June 12 2004, pp. 34-35.

³¹⁰ *Mirror*, 2004, p. 11.

³¹¹ *A New Dictionary of Eponyms*, 1997.

³¹² *World Encyclopedia*, 2000.

*America is for the world just the United States, we live in a sub-America, second class, without identity.*³¹³

In fact, the United States of America was created by a few men who wrote the Constitution in 1787 after gaining independence with Britain. Now after more than 200 years the "Latino"³¹⁴ presence in the US evokes both utopian hopes and fears of cultural transformation.³¹⁵

According to the influential author and journalist Jorge Ramos, presenter of Univision, the biggest Spanish TV channel in the US, Latinos became the largest minority in the US in 2003, with a staggering population of more than 38 million and growing quickly.³¹⁶ Despite Scottish, Welsh, Irish and English, the multicultural country was seasoned with Africans, and flavoured with people from Germans and Mexicans who used to live in the south.³¹⁷

The confusion of the continent's name is highlighted in the Style Guide of the *Times*. They understand the words America(n) and US as synonyms, but clarify some aspects in relation to the other part of the continent:

*... Try to use American as in "American cities, American food" etc.; Put US in headlines and in the context of government institutions, such as US Congress, US Navy, US military operation. Never use America when ambiguity could occur with Canada or Latin America... Common usage allows abbreviation to US in text as well as headlines, but do not ignore the word America.*³¹⁸

Other media like the *Economist* or the *Guardian*, do not mention in their style books any specification about these confusions. Others, like the *BBC News* Style Guide just explores another concern, the differences of US and British English:

*Very many people dislike what they see as the Americanisation of Britain, and they look to the BBC to defend 'Britishness' in its broadest sense. In particular, they demand standard English from us, and we should acknowledge their concerns. At the very least, we should be conscious of what we are doing when we write our scripts.*³¹⁹

³¹³ Galeano, 1976.

³¹⁴ Latinos are called people living in the United States but originally from Latin America, this area is considered the Spanish-speaking, Portuguese-speaking, and French-speaking countries (except Canada) of North America, South America, Central America, and the West Indies. The 20 republics are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. (The Columbia Encyclopedia, 2001).

³¹⁵ DeGuzmán, 1999.

³¹⁶ Ramos, 2004.

³¹⁷ The US Census Bureau does not identify Hispanic because they can be of any ethnic background. Their population estimates by race and Hispanic origin changed beginning with Census 2000. They argue that there are two Hispanic origin categories: Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino. Race and Hispanic origin are considered two separate concepts and therefore Hispanics may be of any race or races. So there are differences between Hispanic population with those of the race populations. (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division)

³¹⁸ *Times* Style and Usage Guide, 2003.

³¹⁹ Allen, 2003, p. 19.

As with many other terms, this distorted meaning of America is now accepted worldwide, among other things as a consequence of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823,³²⁰ and Manifest Destiny in the 19th century, which believed that the expansion of the United States throughout the American continents was both justified and inevitable.³²¹

During that time, the reaction from the newly "independent countries" in Latin America, was a cultural and economic war (versus guerrillas, rebels and activists),³²² a determining factor in the definition of Hispanic cultural identity in the last 100 years.³²³

The Western media leads these stereotypes about the Spanish speaking developing world. Every time you refer to the US as America you are offending the identity of Mexico and all the countries down to Chile and Argentina: from *Rio Bravo* to *Tierra del Fuego*. As the anthropologist Mark Pedelty, who studied war correspondents in Central America during the 80s, said: the civil war in El Salvador is a continuation of the process of colonialism.³²⁴

Ironically, the dictionary of eponyms gives a conservative view. They state that the injustice of the name after Amerigo Vespucci can no longer be rectified.³²⁵ The name comes from the first map of the continent created in 1507 by a German geographer, which included a map labelled "America" that corresponded roughly to South America. The name continued for further mapmakers of continent, not only for South America but unfortunately for North America as well.

Most of encyclopaedias explain that "America" means first and foremost the United States, and North America is used to denote a larger geographical area including also Canada and Mexico.³²⁶

Two historical figures in the struggling history of the continent, among many others, tried to dignify the meaning of "America". Simon Bolivar, the

³²⁰ The statement by US President James Monroe that asserted the authority over the American continent, and declared that European interference in the Western Hemisphere would be regarded as "dangerous to peace and safety" ("manifest destiny" The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2001).

³²¹ World Encyclopedia, 2002.

³²² At least 30 important rebel movements are identified in Latin America during the 20th century. Among the most important: Sandinistas in Nicaragua, Montoneros in Argentina, FARC in Colombia, Shinning Path in Peru, and Fidel Castro and Ernesto Guevara in Cuba and recently Zapatistas in Mexico. (Gross, 1995; Houston Chronicle, 2003; US Department of State; and Directory of Social Movements, 2003)

³²³ Vior, 2002, p. 198.

³²⁴ Pedelty, 1995, p. 15.

³²⁵ They explain that the Florentine navigator had made several trips since 1497 to the "new-land" and his voyages were along the coasts of what are now Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. ("America" A New Dictionary of Eponyms, 1997)

³²⁶ Central America refers to the countries in the narrow strip of land to the south of Mexico (including Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama), and South America to the region to the south of the Panama Canal, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, and others. (Pocket Fowler's Modern English Usage, 1999).

Venezuelan patriot, who, in the XIX century, led the Latin-American independence movement, from 1808 onwards.³²⁷

He succeeded in driving the Spanish from Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. That is why upper Peru was named Bolivia in his honour.³²⁸ His hopes were to unify South America into one confederation, but these were dashed by rivalry between the new states.³²⁹

In 1891, the Cuban essayist, poet, patriot, and leader of the Cuban independence movement José Martí, wrote an essay in the Argentinean newspaper *La Nación*, called "Our America". He attempted to characterize the Latin American identity as a result of the mixture of European, indigenous and African elements.³³⁰ His main doctrines were:

- The 'natural man' is one who has great respect for the land and the people in it. "We should look after our past, our family, and our roots."³³¹
- Govern well in America. It is essential that not only do the people of America band together, but even more they must reject and forget the ways of other lands and create a new rule for this special land.³³²
- He situates his essay within a historical context with mention of the Aztecs, the Incas, Simón Bolívar and figures from Mexico's War of Independence to unify the continent.

Martí asserted the unique *mestizo* character of Latin American culture. He was the first to designate it as opposite of the "other America,"³³³ the Anglo-Saxon culture.³³⁴

Following Martí's and Bolívar's manifests, the United States government does not respect the land, they do not govern well inside their country, and they have not unified the whole continent. Contrarily they have divided it. So they do not deserve to be called America.

But they rule most of the world economically and militarily.

Considering Michael Foucault's analysis of power discourse, the name did not give them the world status that they enjoy. It was the brutal and messianic feelings and economic ambitions, and not a semantic definition. The French sociologist values more the model of war and battle (power) than language and signs:

³²⁷ A Dictionary of World History, 2000.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ Encyclopaedia, 2002.

³³⁰ Martí, 1999.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ Vior, 2002, p. 197.

³³⁴ The term "Anglo-America" is frequently used in reference to Canada and the United States combined, while the term "Middle America" is used to describe the region including Mexico, the republics of Central America, and the Caribbean. (The Columbia Encyclopedia, 2001).

*The history which bears and determinates us as the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning.*³³⁵

Discourse analysis, the analysis of the social production of meanings in power, and politics as the condition and product of meanings, is analyzed by researcher Robert Hodge who emphasises the ideological effect on words over syntax and structure.³³⁶

*All the major ideological struggles will necessary be waged in words, through texts that circulate in various ways by virtue of various technologies, in forms of language that bear the traces of these struggles in innumerable ways.*³³⁷

This discourse process works through a combination of repetition and unobtrusiveness, which means that words like "America" are assumed as the precondition of a language and thought.³³⁸

Other theories cultivate these ideas. The British researcher Michael Halliday makes the distinction of this phenomenon between "Given" and "New" words, as crucial in the way information is organized in speech. The first is taken-for-granted shared assumptions, and ideologically the most potent part of communication since it has the status of not-in-dispute knowledge. "New expressions" might be valued for the hearer but generally are open to most doubt.³³⁹

This topic has been mentioned in the United States, mainly because of the forthcoming elections in 2004. *Hispanic Business* magazine continued the debate again in August and discussed with some experts about some gaffe in the meaning of the name of Uncle Sam.³⁴⁰

They conclude that there is a linguistic problem, because there is no actual English word that denotes people from the United States, according to Lee Pederson, an English professor at Emory University. Someone from France is French, someone from Argentina is an Argentine. But such a word for a US citizen does not exist in English. Ironically, it does exist in Spanish: *estadounidense*,³⁴¹ explained Pederson. So how would you call the *gringos*? He proposed: *Unitedstateser*?

³³⁵ Foucault, 1980, p. 144. Cited by Hodge, 1993, p. 153.

³³⁶ Hodge, 1993, p. 165.

³³⁷ Ibid, p. 161.

³³⁸ Ibid, p. 165.

³³⁹ Halliday, 1985. Cited by Hodge, 1993, p. 165.

³⁴⁰ *Hispanic Business*, August 9 2004.

³⁴¹ The Spanish Language Academy accepts the term, in their dictionary the equivalent to the adjective "American", (which is *Americano/na*) has four meanings: 1.-*Estadounidense* or someone from the United States; 2.-Natural from America; 3.-Belonging to or related to that part of the world; 4.-Indian or someone who comes back rich from America (Real Academia Española, 2001)

In this context, why are you British editors not aware of this? What would be their reaction to a map without the First World, as the online magazine Third World Traveller pictures.³⁴²

Third World Traveller Map



Would you be aware of this non-Western map of the World? So why are you not aware about this English language “defect”? Is it possible to find flaws in the English language? Yes, according to George Orwell, in his famous essay *Politics and the English Language*, he says: “Our civilization is decadent and our language -- so the argument runs -- must inevitably share in the general collapse”.³⁴³

He agrees that the English language is alive and can change, but challenges the bad English lies and the “half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes”. But he is not fatalist:

*It is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely... the point is that the process is reversible.*³⁴⁴

What is worrying is the lack of initiative from the creators of the language to give an adjective to the *yankees*. If you continue with this accepted mock, you are misleading your worldwide audiences. Also you will be grouping the US (as in a carnival), like Tony Blair does with the Iraqi occupation.

Silently in your new srooms you accept lazy stereotypes and boastful Mexicans, an easy place to find mushrooms and peyote, the image of bearded revolutionaries and bloodthirsty dictators, the eternal curse of non-democratic countries, the unsafe economic growth, and the Catholic passive mass.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Third World Traveller is an online magazine that offers an alternative view to the corporate media about the state of democracy in America.

³⁴³ Orwell, 1947.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ Vior, 2002, p. 198.

You use many words to talk about the United States: Uncle Sam, the world's only superpower, or the biggest economy in the world, and so on. But there are some ideas Spanish speaking countries use to describe "their America": *gringos*, *yankee*, *gabachos* and *gueros (blondes)*, or even inside their country Mexicans call them *bolillos* –some sort of a bread roll, because it is white.

Perhaps, among the official name of the country we can guess more options: The United States of North America or United States of Middle North America. Following this patterns it would be much easier to "invent" a word: *Northamericans*.

Moreover, you can dig to find the roots and modify headlines: "Their America bids a final farewell to a president,"³⁴⁶ or "Syngenta moves GM research to (their) America,"³⁴⁷ or "(their) America is dumb and Bush is a liar."³⁴⁸ You have many options. For the moment:

God save the old Colombia! ☹️

³⁴⁶ Buncombe, 2004, pp. 34-35.

³⁴⁷ Milner, 2004.

³⁴⁸ The Mirror, 2004, p. 11.

APPENDIX 3

US and UK news for Mexico: regulation differences

Poor Mexico, so far from God and so near to the United States!
Porfirio Díaz, President of México, 1910

Among the first voices to unmask to the world the international importance of modern Mexico in the 70s was Alan Riding, a Brazilian-Briton who covered Mexico for 13 years from the beginning of that decade until 1984 working as a correspondent for the *Economist*, *Financial Times* and the *New York Times*.³⁴⁹ According to him "Mexico has gone surprisingly unstudied."³⁵⁰

During the 70s, most foreign media covering Mexico were from the United States and Spain. But not many Britons, in fact Riding is notable among today's foreign correspondents for his coverage of the "dirty war" in the 70s and 80s. During that time paramilitary bands supported by president Echeverría descended on student protesters with guns, clubs and chains on June 10 1971 in Mexico City, as part of the systematic government brutality against dissidents.³⁵¹ The protests became a massacre, known as the "Halconazo".

Riding wrote in August 20, 1978 in the *New York Times*:

*Mounting campaign of demonstrations in favour of amnesty and release of 350 'disappeared' persons in Mexico is expected to culminate... to cover many youths who joined guerrilla groups and carried out kidnappings and bank robberies in early '70s... Fate of disappeared persons, said to be held in clandestine jails and military garrisons is not clear. Some disappeared persons who have been brought to trial have complained of torture.*³⁵²

The *Guardian* defined him as one of Britain's best foreign correspondents but he is almost unknown in Britain, "he belongs to the old - and best - school of foreign reporting."³⁵³ After him, other media has sent many reporters from the 80s and 90s specially to cover financial news.

Riding's figure represents an example of the versatile relation between the United Kingdom and United States media covering Mexico. They share not just a language, but many biased news.

The rulers of the wires

³⁴⁹ *New York Times*, Mar 29 2004.

³⁵⁰ *Financial Times*, July 18 1987, p. 14.

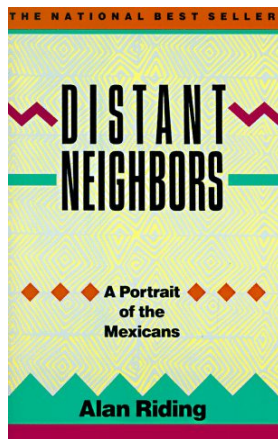
³⁵¹ *Financial Times*, July 26 2004, p. 3.

³⁵² *New York Times*, August 20 1978, p. 124.

³⁵³ *Guardian*, August 28 1987.

Media companies like *Reuters*, AP or CNN dominate the international news flow in Mexico and Latin America. Since the end of the last century and the beginning of the 19th, the US and the UK have come to control the communications hardware. According to the media researcher Thussu, by the late nineteenth century they “owned nearly 75 per cent of the world cables.”³⁵⁴

Until 2004 this situation has not changed with the advent of radio and TV, as the new media of the 20th century, the latter the most influential media in the world. Doris Graber an expert in North American media explains in the book



Mass Media and Politics in the US that the control of satellites is part of the problem. “Developed nations own nearly 90% of the broadcast spectrum and the bulk of satellite facilities.”³⁵⁵ Developing nations want to change this to divide the spectrum equally among all nations.

*But the US and Western countries have strongly resisted their attempts, deeming them infringements of the right to a free press... believing that countries with current capability to use advanced telecommunications facilities should control these facilities.*³⁵⁶

The US covers countries with the most significant diplomatic contacts. According to Graber, in recent years, that has usually meant Britain, France, West Germany, Italy and Russia in Europe; Israel and Egypt in the Middle East; and recently China and Japan in Far East.

Our America is covered lightly apart from Canada and Mexico, except when they become concerned production and export of illicit drugs, civil strikes, or international issues,³⁵⁷ and recently security topics related to military aid and terrorism, especially in Colombia and Peru.

In the same way Britain and France have representation in their former colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean islands, regions where North American reporters tend to be especially sparse.³⁵⁸

How do they cover the stories?

Most media emphasize established white middle-class groups and values, while neglecting interest in minorities. This was one of the concerns that many scholars, especially Latin Americans, complained about during the 70s and 80s with UNESCO.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ Thussu, 2000, p. 18.

³⁵⁵ Graber, 2002, p. 347.

³⁵⁶ Graber, 2002, pp. 372-373.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

³⁵⁹ Graber, 2002, pp. 94-95.

Foreign news is selected primarily for audience appeal rather than political significance, as Graber explains:

*Stories from areas that are familiar because of ample prior stories or because they are common travel destinations are more likely to be published than stories from more remote parts of the world.*³⁶⁰

Such biases make it very difficult to change the images of culturally distant countries among North American audiences, despite the 2,000-mile frontier with Mexico. Additionally complexity in foreign news becomes a major enemy and avoidance or oversimplification the defensive strategy, Graber states.

As this happens, audiences don't understand the rationale for major foreign policies such as support of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico, the limitation of humanitarian aid or military interventions.³⁶¹

For instance, during the Iraq war in 2003 other Western companies and local agencies covered stories about the self-censorship in North American media related to violent pictures of their troops, especially dead soldiers.

Involving language, news and companies

Western international agencies such as British *Reuters* and French Havas -- which latter became Agence France Press-- were established in the last half of the 18th century, and they rapidly came to dominate the world's commercial markets. Newspapers started their news bureaus in major capitals in Western Europe: London, Paris, Bonn and Rome.³⁶²

But until the first half of the 20th century the Associated Press (AP) from the United States expanded internationally subsidised by their government, and expanding political changes in Europe within the weakening of the old empires.³⁶³ However, with AFP and *Reuters*, AP completed the 'cartel' to control the so-called international flow of news.³⁶⁴

After World War I, the weakened British Empire and the abundance of the US media forced *Reuters* to share their news. Both companies signed in 1942 -- during war time-- the first news agreement, effectively creating another 'cartel' for information control.³⁶⁵

Mostly North American media like AP and United Press International have been criticized for news manipulation and providing Western views to the world.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

³⁶² Graber, 2002, pp. 94-95.

³⁶³ Thussu, 2000, p. 21.

³⁶⁴ Gudykunst, 2002, p. 5.

³⁶⁵ Thussu, 2000, p. 22.

³⁶⁶ Scholars like Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman say that "without their domestic base, the AP and UPI could not operate as international agencies. With it they must be North American organizations subject to North American pressure and requirements." (Chomsky-Herman, 1996, p. 2).

Sharing more than new s

New s companies compete fiercely, and most events in the world are now collected by five major wire services: AP, *Reuters*, AFP, ITAR-TSS and Xinhua. But *Reuters* and AP are the only two heavy-weights.

Most of them mix and match footage from various sources, and expand their content minute by minute. Foreign new s from US agencies are supplemented through new s from *Reuters* and AFP;³⁶⁷ also agencies use the benefits of the internationalization of networks through of new s-sharing partnerships with foreign broadcasters.

AP is by far the largest, in the year 2000 it maintained 95 international bureaus and 146 in the US,³⁶⁸ which means 56 more than *Reuters*, the strongest historical competitor. They also defied the British *Reuters* by expanding US financial new s services with Bloomberg.³⁶⁹

But according to professor Jeremy Tunstall AP is not the biggest in producing and selling content North America. He states that since the 1990s North American networks have been overtaken by European media.

*Traditionally, UPI was the strongest news agency in Latin America, followed by AP and AFP. Now, in Latin America, a lone AP competes not only against AFP, but also against a rejuvenated Reuters... Meanwhile, EFE, the Spanish agency, is having some success in its attempt to become the leading news agency in the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking world.*³⁷⁰

AP knows this. That is why they have launched AP International in March 2004, a service that will cover text, photo and video services. "Doing so, it aims to take on its last remaining global rival; new s and information giant *Reuters*."³⁷¹ The new branch will be based in London the "new s capital of the world".

TV: the most influential media

In TV matters CNN International became a classic model of a global new s institution since the 1990s. The twenty-four-hour CABLE NEWS Network in different languages, especially in non-English markets, grew rapidly and reflected 'greater needs for local new s in local languages.'³⁷²

In 1997 they created CNN en Español³⁷³ and became a major player in the international new s game with new s in multiple languages.³⁷⁴ In recent years

³⁶⁷ Graber, 2000, p. 350.

³⁶⁸ Graber, 2000, p. 350.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

³⁷⁰ Tunstall, 1992.

³⁷¹ Townsend, 2004.

³⁷² Volkmer, 1999.

³⁷³ Thussu, 2000, p. 157.

³⁷⁴ Graber, 2000.

similar ideas were established later by *BBC World Service* and *Deutsche Welle* in Berlin.

According to Tunstall the *BBC* attracts more attention simply because it is partly “state-owned and, on top of that, has a good reputation. What it says is very often, but unjustifiably, taken to be the view of the UK government.”³⁷⁵

*They are not the pawns of an authoritarian government, nor are they controlled by ex-advertising executives (a common US pattern), nor are they political party appointees involved in programme management (as in France, Germany and Italy).*³⁷⁶

In fact the British international media has upset more regimes than the North American, he explains. Some examples are the *BBC World Service* in Saudi Arabia and China. “CNN’s general style of reporting is much less likely than the *BBC*’s to upset sensitive regimes”, Tunstall adds.³⁷⁷

Specifically he explains that British TV has always had a much wider range of genres than the US networks. For example, CNN devotes far less time to analysis and documentaries than the *BBC*.³⁷⁸

UK and US regulation differences

The presence of British media worldwide is regarded as more credible and influential than North American media. However in the last 30 years of the 20th century, media of all kinds in the UK seemed more to be under the control of a few large international corporations, headed by brusque individualists and outsize personalities such as media moguls Rupert Murdoch, Robert Maxwell or Conrad Black.³⁷⁹

Television in Britain is another important pearl for the international flow of news. The most important channels *BBC*, *Sky News* and *ITN*, have an international profile.³⁸⁰

However, the experience with the *BBC*, even with the recent debate about the Hutton Enquiry, Greg Dyke and Tony Blair, shows that media can keep programming reasonably free from direct political interference.³⁸¹ Public-service broadcasters in Britain set an international standard for apparently impartial, authoritative, and accurate reporting.³⁸²

They have a highly specialized profile, because the agenda set by them is followed to a certain extent by other media to the UK and around the world.

³⁷⁵ Tunstall, 1993.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid*

³⁷⁹ Seymour-Ure, 1997, p. 118.

³⁸⁰ Lynch, 2004.

³⁸¹ Graber, 2000, p. 24.

³⁸² Hackett-Zhao, 1998, p. 74.

Their influence is large said BBC World presenter Jake Lynch.³⁸³ These media are regulated in the public interest, he says. There are specifications about the contents of the stories:

1. There are more than two sides.
2. No significant perspective should go unreported or unrepresented.
3. All views should be reflected.

Lynch explains that these are safeguards for the audience against bias, manipulation and favouritism, and which means support transparency, balance and fairness. This is enjoyed by people around the world because of the regulatory framework that offers “perhaps the most important single public interest regulator intervention in global media markets”.

For instance, a BBC reporter in Baghdad will be used in the BBC domestic service, but also BBC World, and of course everything goes to their website in 50 languages.³⁸⁴ But unfortunately, Lynch adds, some of these perspectives are not reflected or represented: the regulatory framework doesn't always work, and especially tends to be around those official issues in the UK and in Washington. The Iraq war is an example:

Most of the stories were not focused on oil as the main problem but about Weapons of Mass Destruction. Tony Blair didn't want to discuss what will happen to Iraq's oil. There is an agenda, because the habits of the BBC and some of the other news organizations is to base the news agenda fairly closed on the words of authorities figures, or authority sources.

Hence, if stories tend to be around official issues, then the lack of coverage for Mexico and Latin America is part of the short term interests of the British government in those countries.

The nature of the influence of news organizations will be in accord with the preoccupations of official sources in London, he said. “Despite what we might think about the media and its freedom the media tracks pretty closely the preoccupation of officialdom”.³⁸⁵

The differences with US

³⁸³ For instance he said that at Sky News the headlines are available in around 80 countries, and ITN has a separate international program which in the US is available in around 50 centres throughout the United States (Lynch, 2004).


³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ A brief look at the Internet service of the United Kingdom Parliament shows that typing in the search engine the word ‘Vicente Fox’ the Mexican president, seven results were displayed and related to different topics, like the cavers issue, Latin America, globalization, and change of government in 2000. Typing Saddam Hussein, 1000 results were displayed; George Bush, 898 results; Osama Bin Laden, 850; and Jacques Chirac, 83. (Parliament Publications, 2004)

In March 29 of 1980, when El Salvador was suffering a civil war, *The New York Times* carried a Reuter's dispatch noting the resignation of three high Salvadoran officials, who "resigned last night in protest against the junta's inability to halt violence by leftist and right forces". The preceding day an AP dispatch reported the same resignations, but without any explanations of the reasons for this.³⁸⁶

There is the fear of undue concentration of influence in the US because a few giant organizations control the nation's media, says Graber. "Outright government ownership and control of the media has been comparatively limited."³⁸⁷

*The national government owns and operates vast overseas radio and television enterprises. At home it partially controls a far-flung system of public television and radio broadcasting.*³⁸⁸

The ethos of objectivity of US media became embodied in court rulings and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations surrounding the 1949 'Fairness Doctrine'. Each broadcaster was required to maintain standards of fairness and balance by affording "reasonable opportunity for discussion of conflicting views on issues of public importance."³⁸⁹ But the Reagan administration repealed the 'Fairness Doctrine' in 1987 in a frenzy of deregulation and created a big debate in North American and European media. Nevertheless, this specific action did not produce a fundamental questioning of the ethos in regulatory thinking.³⁹⁰ 

³⁸⁶ Chomsky, 1996, p. 51.

³⁸⁷ Graber, 2000, pp. 35-36.

³⁸⁸ Graber, 2000, p. 55.

³⁸⁹ Hackett-Zhao, 1998, p. 74.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

APPENDIX 4

Foreign news structure in the UK

Latin America has long been largely unreported in Britain, since the 1930s the great majorities of British staff correspondents have been based first in Europe and then in the US, says Jeremy Tunstall in his book *Newspaper Power*³⁹¹.

For British quality dailies in London having a team of staff of foreign correspondents means being a prestige media. In the last 40 years foreign correspondents almost disappeared in Tabloids, and they increased in broadsheets, but generally foreign news decreased, with a little up rise after September 11 2001.

By contrast, since 1965 popular newspapers have largely given up employment staff correspondents permanently stationed on foreign cities.

Foreign coverage changes with the international scene and at any time British media generally selects one or two 'top trouble spots', which come from the world conflicts in two forms:³⁹² Recognized by the whole world and especially significant for Britain.

Most popular foreign newspapers in Britain³⁹³

Newspaper	Decade
<i>Times</i>	1785-1950
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	1960
<i>Financial Times</i>	1970-2000

According to Tunstall the foreign news of the British, like its definition of history, reflects its prejudices and sentiments, "because it ignores the events and places we want to forget and it emphasizes the events, places and faces they prefer and admire".³⁹⁴

This attitude is explained by US reporter Mort Rosenblum in 1977. He states that broadcasters do not have much air time, so editors feel that the most select what their audiences want, or they will lose the readers and viewers³⁹⁵.

Most of journalists would agree that in the 60s the senior foreign correspondents covered more numerous exiting stories in more different

³⁹¹ Tunstall, 1997, p. 341.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

³⁹⁴ Tunstall, 1997, p. 341. p. 342.

³⁹⁵ Rosenblum, Jul. 77.

places than did any other generation.³⁹⁶ Names like Frank Robertson, Godfrey Hudson or Stephen Barber are among the most recognized ones.³⁹⁷

In 1975 most of British newspapers had financial problems in Fleet Street, with low advertisement and rising paper prices and many staff had to pack their luggage.

Up market national daily papers: deployment of staff foreign correspondents and stringers, early 1990s³⁹⁸

<i>Region</i>	<i>Staff correspondents</i>	<i>Stringers</i>	<i>Full-time equivalent</i>
Western Europe	5	23	10.7
Eastern Europe	2	7	4.1
Asia	2	17	6.6
North America	4	5	5.3
Middle East	2	9	4.6
Africa	1	10	3.4
Latin America	--	14	3.2
Australasia	1	5	1.9
Total	17	90	40

So, if foreign news in Britain are shrinking, why is London's status as news centre increasing?

Tunstall explains that foreign news had acquired an increasingly financial flavour with the expansion *Reuters*, the *Economist* and the *Financial Times*. Historically he defines the *Financial Times* as the new Britain's foreign news prestige leading paper, over (old) *Times*.

According to Jake Lynch, *BBC World* reporter and advocate of 'peace journalism', in the 80s, most of British broadsheets might have had staff correspondents in all the old European capitals, like Vienna, Prague, and might have had Africa correspondents. "Now they are not, they will probably rely on news agencies", Lynch said.

But there is a large increase of number of correspondents in US, where 20 years ago they might have one in Washington, now they probably have two or three, New York, Los Angeles, and maybe Florida³⁹⁹.

Lynch explains that especially in the last ten years, the change on the on the disposition of foreign news, might be related to technology, especially in pictures for print and for broadcasting.

³⁹⁶ Tunstall, 1997, p. 342.

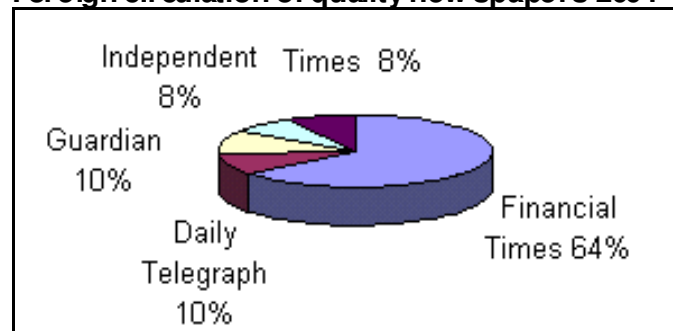
³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

³⁹⁹ Lynch, Cardiff, 25 May 2004.

That is why television's foreign news impact has steadily increased during the decades, as Tunstall adds:

Foreign circulation of quality new papers 2004⁴⁰⁰



Its colour pictures and its speed give television the ability to dramatize one or two stories per evening and to demand that 'something must be done' about the current crisis, coup, earthquake, famine or civil war.⁴⁰¹

The 90s was the best decade for foreign correspondents. In 1996 the five quality papers had between them around 100 staff correspondents, 30 more than 1965.⁴⁰²

Tunstall described the structure of a London foreign desk:

- 1.-Staff correspondents and stringers.
- 2.-Desk personnel who run the foreign news operation.
- 3.-Attached to the desk to diplomatic correspondents who cover the circuit of London.
- 4.-Foreign sub-editors.

British foreign correspondents

Most of British foreign desks of quality papers would have an international news, or world news section. The Tabloids would not have staff correspondents, just foreign editors.

Tunstall calculates that foreign desk with seventeen staff correspondents would be employing forty staff journalists in total, plus part-time stringers. The up market daily newspaper may devote the equivalent of three full pages (without advertising to foreign news). Including front page foreign stories and other sections they may carry up to six full pages.

The Financial Times is an exception and has a higher number of pages.⁴⁰³ Since the 70s and until 2004 they lead foreign newspaper sells. The most recent figure by ABC shows around 64% their circulation outside the UK. The other broadsheet papers follow the same pattern with around 10% of their sales outside the Queen Elizabeth reign. 📰

⁴⁰⁰Audit Bureau of Circulations, from 28-Jun-2004 to 01-Aug-2004.

⁴⁰¹Tunstall, 1997, p. 339.

⁴⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 341.

⁴⁰³Tunstall, 1997, p. 340.

APPENDIX 5

1967: Reuters' first dispatch about Mexico

Apparently *Reuters* sent the first dispatch about Mexico on the 18th of August 1867, and it was understandably a story related to Europe. They covered the execution of the former Emperor Maximilian of Austria, by President Benito Juárez, considered a national hero.⁴⁰⁴ However it is not clear if this story was the first dispatch. According to John Entwistle, *Reuters* Group Archivist, "Whether the latter was the first *Reuters* dispatch about Mexico I cannot accurately say."⁴⁰⁵

Reuters, as most of British companies has always had problems penetrating the Latin American Spanish markets. Before 1874 when they completed the cable linking Europe to Brazil, they relied on the French agency, Havas, to distribute its services in Latin America.

"Before this time, probably made use of agents and other contacts to forward news from the continent - the first news telegram from South American (Brazil) is dated 1858" Entwistle explained.

In 1920s, when the agency was part of the British government, the Foreign Office was keen to establish itself in Latin America,⁴⁰⁶ and the 30s they started distributing news in South America through a service centred in Argentina, already invaded by North American agencies. But after three years they had great losses and withdrew.⁴⁰⁷

Germany and England in Latin America

In 1940, Before World War II, French Havas fell in Argentina as the Germans invaded France "and *Reuters* was able to make any lasting impact on the news situation in Latin America", added Entwistle.

The Company was asked by the British Government to take over the existing Havas operation in Latin America, to break it up and prevent its use by Germany.

"*Reuters*, subsidised by the British Government, took over the Havas agents and staff of the larger offices in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile and Montevideo, together with the smaller operations in La Paz and Lima", he added.

⁴⁰⁴ Maximilian headed an Imperial Monarchy by Napoleon III, Emperor of France and a group of Mexican conservatives who deserted him

⁴⁰⁵ Entwistle, 2004.

⁴⁰⁶ Read, 1992, p. 248.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

In Mexico, the news agency ANTA, based in Mexico City, had previously distributed Havas's services and a similar arrangement was made with regard to *Reuters* services.


In Argentina, they established another office that was fairly successful until 1958 when, under pressure of competition from the *AFP*, *Reuters* was forced to withdraw its General News Service (then only transmitted in Argentina and Chile).⁴⁰⁸

According to Entwistle in 1964 the Company decided to change the strategy and in 1964 they revived the general-news service in English and Spanish and by 1968 they had around 30 journalists working "in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Columbia and Mexico were added in 1968".

Then they launched a news agency in 1970 called *Agencia Latinoamericana de Informacion (Latin)* as a cooperative with newspaper shareholders from seven countries. But again four years later they made heavy losses in 1974.

Now, *Reuters* has around 20 years experience in Mexico and is the biggest news agency in Mexico with around 25 staff and nine British correspondents. It is also the second largest office in Latin America, after Brazil.

The office works in Spanish and English and divides information in two areas:

- 1.-English language correspondents to tell the Mexico story to an international audience in English.
- 2.-Spanish language correspondents that tell the Mexico story to an international audience in Spanish, and supply local news to a local audience, primarily local: the Mexican markets.⁴⁰⁹ 

⁴⁰⁸ Read, 1992, p. 249.

⁴⁰⁹ Murria, 2004.

APPENDIX 6

BBC in Latin America

The BBC started broadcasting in Spanish to Latin America and Spain since March 1938.⁴¹⁰ The service took place just before Second World War, particularly because of the good relationship from Germany with some Latin American countries.⁴¹¹

Particularly, the influence in Mexico was notable in radio until 1996 when they started alliances with Latin American media as a continuous effort to reach audiences for its Spanish and Portuguese service.⁴¹² First they transmitted news with InfoRed, one of the most popular private radio stations with a potential audience of 23m in Mexico City and 44 urban centres reaching about 250,000 people.⁴¹³

This was the largest agreement that the World Service had completed in Latin America. According to the *Financial Times*, "this deal started as a BBC strategy to spread its audience from its core short-wave radio service and TV."⁴¹⁴

Radio in Mexico is powerful, since the 1930s it spread successfully around Mexico reaching high audiences in the 90s.⁴¹⁵ In 2003 the news programs with the highest audiences were: Info-Red with 14% of the market, Radio Formula 5%, and Formato 21 with 4%.⁴¹⁶ People listen to radio (as entertainment and news source) for an average of four hours. Around 82% would listen to music, 36% to news.⁴¹⁷

In 2000 the BBC in Spanish signed a contract with prominent Mexican journalist and TV presenter Ricardo Rocha. His program *Detrás de la Noticia – Behind the News* with ACIR radio was one of the top three radio conglomerates with listeners in 50 cities with around 150 stations. The BBC supplied news bulletins for international news and other short programmes.

⁴¹⁰ *BBC Mundo*, 2004.

⁴¹¹ During WWII British diplomats even established in Mexico a secret propaganda plan supported by Havas – the French agency, to switch public opinion against Germany, supported, diplomats, corporations and local newspapers. Though it was the British governments, this was not related to the BBC (Riblo, 1983, pp. 112-126).

⁴¹² Before their incursion in to Mexico the service reached 2m people potential audience in Latin America, and 1998 it raised this to 3.2m (Gapper, 1998, p. 8).

⁴¹³ *Financial Times*, March 23 1998, p. 8.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*.

⁴¹⁵ The number local and national AM, FM and short wave radio stations in 2003 were around 1,400 among the biggest number in the world (Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 52).

⁴¹⁶ Riva Palacio, 2004, p. 52.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*. These radio stations will gather 23% of around 18 million people, which is around four million. Considering that 36% of people listen mainly to news programs, it will be like one million 400 thousand people, which is twice the circulation of national newspapers altogether.

Since 2000 also, *BBC Mundo* continued expanding signing agreements with around 50 Mexican radio stations.⁴¹⁸ They reported educative series and themes of social and cultural interest.⁴¹⁹

In 2001 Rocha's program and *BBC* moved to IMER an educative public radio station. And in 2003 *Detras de la Noticia* again moves to the second biggest station in Mexico: Radio Formula, with around 100 radio stations in the country.

BBC and Mexican TV

Mexican society likes entertainment, because the two main companies have the biggest audiences. Most of BBC presence in agreements with cultural channels especially with awarded broadcaster *Canal 22* and *Canal 11*, and series with commercial *TV Azteca*.

The most important TV station in Mexico remains by far Televisa, the biggest TV series producer in the World and with 36% of the preferences⁴²⁰. The second TV Azteca with 28% of the audience.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ BBC Monitoring World Media, September 29 2000.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Riva Palacio, 2004, p.52

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

APPENDIX 7

The *Independent* covering Mexican floods

The extreme importance that the British media give to Mexican stories related to the US can be very biased, almost as tabloids do. For instance, the coverage of Mexico related to tragedies and disasters.

The 6th of August 2004 flash floods killed 31 people and destroyed part of Piedras Negras, a Mexican city in the border of the state of Coahuila with Eagle Pass, Texas. This was the worst incident ever in the region in years. The *Independent* just covered the story in briefs with just around 100 words, both stories with a US perspective.

April 6th 2004: Dozens were also reported missing after heavy rain forced the Escondido river to rise 25 feet in 15 minutes, flooding hundreds of houses. US Border Patrol helicopters helped in the rescue operation.⁴²²

April 7th 2004: Rescue workers pulled three more bodies from ruined homes in the north of the country yesterday, taking the death toll to 34.... The floods swept through Piedras Negras, across the Rio Grande river from Texas.⁴²³

The story was published because this city is in the border with the United States, not because of the importance for Mexico. In this city there was no folklore or pre-Hispanic world to conquest the imagination of British readers.

They also missed the point about the name of Escondido river along with other ones, which flows to Rio Grande, (because the river that divides the border is called Rio Bravo in the Mexican side). The *Times* also published a 23 word ridiculous brief. No other British paper got anything related. 📰

⁴²² *Independent*, April 6 2004, p. 24.

⁴²³ *Independent*, April 7 2004, p. 24.

APPENDIX 8

Extracts from January's the *Financial Times* article

The article was published the 31 of January 2004 in the *Financial Times* as the cover story of the FT Magazine for the weekends.

1.-Financial irregularities

"Little Independent information is available. The foundation has not made public its audited financial statements since 2001. It gave the *Financial Times* partial statements for 2002. Statements for 2003 are not due until later this year."

"Some of the business of her foundation, including press relations, is handled by her personal staff at Los Pinos, the presidential residence, and their salaries are paid by taxpayer funds."

"In fact, only 4.6mpesos (?226,000) of the concert's proceeds of 72mpesos, were donated that year to "those who need the most", according to the 2001 audited statements."

"In 2002, only 3.2m pesos from direct contributions were distributed to other charities, according to its report for the year 2002."

"The exact amount isn't clear since the foundation would not make its financial officers available to answer questions about its audited financial statements."

"With an accelerated fundraising machine that is asking for millions from billionaires and spare coins from supermarket shoppers, Vamos Mexico has become one of the most visible - and controversial - parts of the Fox administration's promised 'government of change'."

"The foundation refuses to name the 93 individuals who donated an average of Dollars 40,000 each in 2002."

"Mrs Fox said her goal in releasing the 2002 annual report, was "to leave completely clear the origin and destination of the funds we raised". Unfortunately, the poorly photocopied document was a jumble of erroneous maths, misspellings (Sahagún was spelled Sahun) and financial obfuscation, such as failing to distinguish between cash and in-kind donations."

2.-Presidential ambitions and the use of public funds

"Some of the business of her foundation, including press relations, is handled by her personal staff at Los Pinos, the presidential residence, and their salaries are paid by taxpayer funds. Critics say the foundation is a thinly veiled vehicle for promoting her presidential ambitions."

"But none of these reforms has softened the grinding poverty that afflicts half the population."


"Like other controversial first ladies - including Argentina's Eva Peron - Marta Sahagún is despised by many in the elite. They see her as an uneducated, provincial woman whose ambitions outpace her capabilities, which trades her control over the president's schedule."

3. Harassment and intimidation

"After the foundation had refused requests for interviews for months, the first lady herself did eventually accede. I was invited to the presidential cabin amid the manicured gardens of *Los Pinos*."

"OK! But I want you to be very clear because the fundamental mission of *Vamos Mexico* isn't about collecting millions of pesos. That's not the fundamental mission," she said slowly, enunciating every word as if I didn't understand Spanish very well."

"One of her aides at *Los Pinos* phoned the FT's bureau chief in Mexico (who happens to be my husband) to ask if I was doing journalistic work or had some other mission."

"In November, the Latin America editor of the FT received a call in London from Baroness Patricia Rawlings, a Tory shadow minister for foreign affairs in the House of Lords, to relay the first lady's fears that the story might be biased and to ask about our plans to publish it. The first lady's personal secretary then called the paper's Mexico office and the British Embassy to ask for the contact information of the owner of the FT (which is a subsidiary of the publicly quoted Pearson group)." 

APPENDIX 9

Mexican financial news slump and 80s tragedies

It was another world, another story. With the Cold War still underway, Mexico was not a favourable market for British industries. The decade started with President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), followed by Carlos Salinas' (1988-1994) liberal ideas and the "technocrat"⁴²⁴ leaders, presidents with economic degrees from the United States who tackled the era of the economic crisis and sold the false idea of modernization.⁴²⁵

Still, Mexico was not a predominant country in the international media. The 70s oil boom started the so-called "false" economic miracle, said Ignacio Catalan, director of *El Universal online* and experienced finance reporter.

The winds of extreme liberalism re-routed the smell of Latin gardens to Europe, full of beautiful flowers – bargains. Mexico should forget about old Indian traditions and nationalism. "Globalization and entrepreneurs" were ready to administer countries like companies, dressing them up as emerging markets and democracies.

The topics that made it to the foreign press were the oil boom, the 1985 earthquake, the economic crisis and the nationalisation of banks, the football World Cup, and political scandals. The economic trauma, with political and social disturbances, elevated the 'country risk' by analysts and rating agencies.

It was not until the consolidation of the oil boom in the 80s that Mexico deserved to be called an "emerging market", despite the fact that the formal "birth asset" class took place in the mid-1970 under the auspices of the World Bank; it then experienced rapid development in the 90s.⁴²⁶

The worst paragraphs of the 80s

Most of the business stories published by the British press appeared in the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*, while a few general news stories were carried by the *Guardian* and the *Times*. The dramatic first paragraphs of the stories reflected the importance of Mexico to the United States.

"The Mexican peso fell in foreign exchange markets yesterday after the Bank of Mexico announced that, for the time being, it would allow the currency to float freely against the U.S. dollar. After a confused and erratic day in Mexico City the

⁴²⁴ According to the *New York Times*, an entire generation in Mexico has been governed by Presidents who had never won office before, and who were chosen by their predecessors. These Presidents, were foreign-trained economists called technocrats. Ernesto Zedillo studied in Yale, Ph.D., '78; Carlos Salinas in Harvard, Ph.D., '78 and Miguel de la Madrid in Harvard, master's, '65. (*The New York Times*, June 24, 1999)

⁴²⁵ Catalan, 2004.

⁴²⁶ Blázquez et al, 2004, p. 297.

peso was closed at 37.75 to the dollar, compared with its close on Wednesday night of 26.75.”⁴²⁷

Financial Times, February 19, 1982

“President Jose Lopez Portillo yesterday ordered the nationalisation of Mexico's private banking system and imposed total exchange controls in a drastic bid to halt currency speculation, which has left the country on the verge of bankruptcy.”⁴²⁸

Financial Times, September 2, 1982

“Up to 1,000 people were feared dead last night and hundreds more injured in the rubble of fallen buildings in Mexico City after an earthquake engulfed three Mexican states and shook buildings as far away as Texas.”⁴²⁹

The Guardian, September 20, 1985

“England went out of the World Cup yesterday when Diego Maradona scored twice to give Argentina a 2-1 victory in their quarter-final tie in Mexico City.”⁴³⁰

The Times, June 23, 1986

⁴²⁷ *Financial Times*, February 19 1982, p38.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Guardian*, September 20 1985.

⁴³⁰ *Times*, June 13 1986.

APPENDIX 10

Infosel: The Mexican Bloomberg?

Financial coverage in Mexico was not in Reuters's main interest, though they were the leading financial agency in English. But they had to react after the creation of Infosel, a leading Mexican economic real time news company launched in 1991 by Alejandro Junco, owner of El Norte newspaper.⁴³¹ Two years later, Infosel controlled the Mexican financial and company news market.

"Infosel was a new model of business news, it was the best moment to launch a company", said former *Reuters* editor Cecilia Cardenas. She analysed the social and economical environment of Mexico: Privatisation was starting, along with the talks about NAFTA, the divisions between capitalism and socialism were beyond the *Times*, the focus was on the financial area, guerrillas in Central America were not news any more, and peace process were starting.⁴³²

Corporations required new information, and Infosel was providing it. In 1992 the *Financial Times* praised it saying it was "the best source of financial and private sector information... the wire service gives real time prices on equity, money and commodity markets and market-related information on the companies and politics as it becomes public."⁴³³

A similar situation occurred when the US financial service Bloomberg was launched in North America. The 'upstart business' news company was founded in 1981 and in less than 20 years established its business worldwide and challenged *Reuters*' historical supremacy.⁴³⁴

Worldwide, in 1984 *Reuters* felt that the availability of general news on screen, which was reported and edited with the needs of economic-services subscribers in mind, gave the company's non-media products a competitive edge.⁴³⁵

The North American company and Infosel had three common merits: they were private, created innovative services, and signed media alliances with international news agencies and financial services like AFP, AP and Dow Jones.

⁴³¹ In 1993 Junco moves to Mexico City and launches *Reforma* Newspaper. Now he owns five newspapers in Mexico with around 3.500 workers.

⁴³² Cardenas, 2004.

⁴³³ *Financial Times*, November 20 1992, p. 5.


⁴³⁴ Bartram, 2003, pp.387-399.

⁴³⁵ Read, 1991, p. 400.

During the 1990s, *Reuters*' management was constantly talking about creating a "Bloomberg killer", but it never arrived.⁴³⁶ Bloomberg is now an international leading agency and in 2001 had 1,100 reporters and editors in 80 bureaux in 50 countries.⁴³⁷

Reuters planned the same in Mexico. They had most of its correspondents in Central America, covering guerrillas, coups and earthquakes, but in 1993 the British agency decided to follow Infosel model and launched a more complete Spanish financial news service, leveraging on the previous small desk it had: they succeeded. *Reuters* had many advantages when it came to the English language and worldwide resources, but *Infosel* still is the main actor in Mexico, but not as relevant as it used to be.

In October 1999, *Infosel* with 70,000 subscribers, and signed a joint venture with Telefonica de Espana (now TerraLycos Group),⁴³⁸ an internet powerhouse with local presence throughout Latin America.⁴³⁹ Now Infosel Financiero is installed on the desk of around 4,000 professionals, and research departments of Wall Street.⁴⁴⁰

The verdict: *Reuters* is a huge financial player in Mexico, *Infosel* is now in world leagues with *TerraLycos*, and most of Mexican financial services, as well as banks are in the hands of global companies: bienvenido-welcome. 

⁴³⁶ Bartram, 2003, p. 395.

⁴³⁷ Idem

⁴³⁸ Mandel-Campbell, 1999, p. 24.

⁴³⁹ *Infosel*, (Mexico City) 2004.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

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