

THE ROLE OF HEGEMONY IN SELECT NEWS STORIES IN WESTERN BROADCAST MEDIA

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ABSTRACT: *In this paper, the researcher discusses about the role of hegemony in selected news stories aired in Western Broadcast media namely CNN. The purpose of the study is to understand and interpret the news presented by the media houses of the West like CNN and how hegemony plays a dominant role in the Western Media. To comprehend the concept of hegemony of West in Media and to show how channels like Al Jazeera might be the next big thing in media in coming years. Recent study shows 91% of South Asia follows cross border news which means broadcast news viewers in South Asia are more interested what is happening around the world and the US and UK follow 46% of cross border news. But UK and the US together contribute 74% of the source of Global news whereas all of Asia contributes 3%. (Venkataramakrishnan, 2016). This clearly shows west have complete dominance over the Global narrative in terms of news. Further, the objective of the study was to perceive how hegemony of the West has to end to have a proper balance of power politics between Nations. Through this study the researcher would try to understand and conclude by restoring the balance by creating a global media environment that is not located out of Washington, New York or London. The methods incorporated throughout the research paper were review of literature, content analysis and expert interview. Content analysis was designed on the basis of few selected news stories broadcasted in CNN and how there is a certain Western domination in CNN.*

Key Words: *: Hegemony, Western Media, Domination, Balance of Power.*

1. Introduction

Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas. The term hegemony is today often used as shorthand to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to become commonsensical and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas (Rosamond, 2016). The associated term hegemony is used to identify the actor, group, class, or state that exercises hegemonic power or that is responsible for the dissemination of hegemonic ideas.

Hegemony derives from a Greek term that translates simply as “dominance over” and that was used to describe relations between city-states. Its use in political analysis was somewhat limited until its intensive discussion by the Italian politician and philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci’s discussion of hegemony followed from his attempts to understand the survival of the capitalist state in the most-advanced Western countries. As a follower of Karl Marx, Gramsci understood the predominant mode of rule as class rule and was interested in explaining the ways in which concrete institutional forms and material relations of production came to prominence. The supremacy of a class and thus the reproduction of its associated mode of production could be obtained by brute domination or coercion. Yet, Gramsci’s key observation was that in advanced capitalist societies the perpetuation of class rule was achieved through largely consensual means—through intellectual and moral leadership. Gramsci’s analysis of hegemony thus involves an analysis of the ways in which such capitalist ideas are disseminated and accepted as commonsensical and normal. A hegemonic class is one that is able to attain the consent of other social forces, and the retention of this consent is an ongoing project. To secure this consent requires a group to understand its own interests in relation to the mode of production, as well as the motivations, aspirations, and interests of other groups. Under capitalism, Gramsci observed the relentless contribution of civil society institutions to the shaping of mass cognitions. Via his concept of the national-popular, he also showed how hegemony required the articulation and distribution of popular ideas beyond narrow class interests.

The news shown in CNN is full of hegemony of the West and shows news relating only to the West and its affair and giving less importance to news of the Eastern part of the globe. Taking the example of Beirut attacks and Syria attacks, the researcher found out how more importance was given to the local news of US which included news related to Donald Trump but the apathy in Syria and Lebanon were overlooked.

2. Review of literature

The journal 'Hegemony' talks about Hegemony is the power or dominance that one social group holds over others. Also, how hegemony is described as a Social Class within a nation Hegemony is 'domination and subordination in the field of relations structured by power Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony (Lull, 1995)

The article 'Why Western media (still) doesn't get the new India' talks about how The New York Times, The Economist and The Guardian, among others, have since the May 2014 parliamentary elections carried several articles a professional newspaper should have tossed into the bin. So why do otherwise respectable newspapers allow their pages to be sullied thus? It can't be prejudice alone. And it can't just be incompetence – though, as my London-based author-friend says, both play a part. Most Western journalists come from working class or middle-class backgrounds. During the UPA government, led by a British-educated prime minister (Dr. Manmohan Singh) and remote-controlled by a European (Sonia Gandhi), the same newspapers found little to fault in India. Foreign journalists wrote fewer critical articles on the Sonia Gandhi-Manmohan Singh government's ten corrupt years in office than they have already written on the Modi government's five months-and-a-bit. Even when the 2G, Commonwealth Games and Coalgate scams erupted, there was virtually no investigative reportage from the Western print, electronic and online media. But the moment a rustic, Hindi-speaking prime minister (Narendra Modi) took office, negative reportage of India surged (Merchant, 2014)

The article 'Why do deaths in Paris get more attention than deaths in Beirut?' talks about how there have been many voices complaining that the Paris attacks have received more global attention than similar attacks in Lebanon and Iraq, and that the global news agenda is more sensitive about the loss of white western lives than others. This is technically a sound point. Ideally we should care about all deaths equally, but its human nature that we do not. Not out of some crass disregard for the lives of others, but the simple limitations of what we can care about, its proximity to home, and how it grabs our attention. Yes the media is skewed, but we, the consumers, are also complicit – in that media is no longer a top-down affair, transmitting information to inert readers or watchers. Global audience determines the news agenda far more than previously (Malik, 2017). Social media and, more crucially, the ability of new organizations to gauge which stories get the most hits, attention and circulation; mean that we are now as guilty of determining the agenda as editors are, if not more.

The article 'Gramsci and Hegemony' (Antonio Gramsci) talks about the idea of a 'third face of power', or 'invisible power' has its roots partly, in Marxist thinking about the pervasive power of ideology, values and beliefs in reproducing class relations and concealing contradictions (Heywood, 1994). Marx recognized that economic exploitation was not the only driver behind capitalism, and that the system was reinforced by a dominance of ruling class ideas and values – leading to Engels's famous concern that 'false consciousnesses would keep the working class from recognizing and rejecting their oppression (Heywood, 1994).

False consciousness, in relation to invisible power, is itself a 'theory of power' in the Marxist tradition. It is particularly evident in the thinking of Lenin, who 'argued that the power of 'bourgeois ideology' was such that, left to its own devices, the proletariat would only be able to achieve 'trade union consciousness', the desire to improve their material conditions but within the capitalist system' (Heywood 1994). A famous analogy is made to workers accepting crumbs that fall off the table (or indeed are handed out to keep them quiet) rather than claiming a rightful place at the table. The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, imprisoned for much of his life by Mussolini, took this idea further in his Prison Notebooks with his widely influential notions of 'hegemony' and the 'manufacture of consent' (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci saw the capitalist state as being made up of two overlapping spheres, a 'political society' (which rules through force) and a 'civil society' (which rules through consent). This is a different meaning of civil society from the 'associational' view common today, which defines civil society as a 'sector' of voluntary organisations and NGOs. Gramsci saw civil society as the public sphere where trade unions and political parties gained concessions from the bourgeois state, and the sphere in which ideas and beliefs were shaped, where bourgeois 'hegemony' was reproduced in cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions to 'manufacture consent' and legitimacy (Heywood, 1994).

The political and practical implications of Gramsci's ideas were far-reaching because he warned of the limited possibilities of direct revolutionary struggle for control of the means of production; this 'war of attack' could only succeed with a prior 'war of position' in the form of struggle over ideas and beliefs, to create a new hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). This idea of a 'counter-hegemonic' struggle – advancing alternatives to dominant ideas of what is normal and legitimate – has had broad appeal in social and

political movements. It has also contributed to the idea that 'knowledge' is a social construct that serves to legitimate social structures (Heywood 1994).

In practical terms, Gramsci's insights about how power is constituted in the realm of ideas and knowledge – expressed through consent rather than force – have inspired the use of explicit strategies to contest hegemonic norms of legitimacy. Gramsci's ideas have influenced popular education practices, including the adult literacy and consciousness-raising methods of Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), liberation theology, methods of participatory action research (PAR), and many approaches to popular media, communication and cultural action.

The idea of power as 'hegemony' has also influenced debates about civil society. Critics of the way civil society is narrowly conceived in liberal democratic thought – reduced to an 'associational' domain in contrast to the state and market – have used Gramsci's definition to remind us that civil society can also be a public sphere of political struggle and contestation over ideas and norms. The goal of 'civil society strengthening' in development policy can thus be pursued either in a neo-liberal sense of building civic institutions to complement (or hold to account) states and markets, or in a Gramscian sense of building civic capacities to think differently, to challenge assumptions and norms, and to articulate new ideas and visions.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical analysis provides a foundation for the research study. Theoretical framework also helps the researcher to substantiate and validate the findings from the content and comparative analysis. This also proves that the findings of the research are valid. This method of analysis helps the researcher to generalize the problem statement and arrive at conclusions. The researcher has used 'Agenda Setting Theory' and 'Magic bullet' theory for this particular paper.

3.1 Agenda setting theory

Agenda setting describes a very powerful influence of the media – the ability to tell us what issues are important. As far back as 1922, the newspaper columnist Walter Lippmann was concerned that the media had the power to present images to the public. McCombs and Shaw investigated presidential campaigns in 1968, 1972 and 1976. In the research done in 1968 they focused on two elements: awareness and information. Investigating the agenda-setting function of the mass media, they attempted to assess the relationship between what voters in one community said were important issues and the actual content of the media messages used during the campaign. McCombs and Shaw concluded that the mass media exerted a significant influence on what voters considered to be the major issues of the campaign

Agenda-setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basis assumptions underlie most research on agenda-setting: (1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda-setting role of mass communication is the time frame for this phenomenon. In addition, different media have different agenda-setting potential. Agenda-setting theory seems quite appropriate to help us understand the pervasive role of the media (for example on political communication systems).

3.2 Magic Bullet theory

The magic bullet perspective, also called the hypodermic needle model, is a model for communications. Magic bullet theory has been around since the 1920s to explain "how mass audiences might react to mass media". According to University of Twent in the Netherlands, the theory states that mass media have a "direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences."

This theory, based on assumptions about human nature rather than on empirical evidence, was not as widely accepted as mass-media experts of the era indicated. The most famous magic bullet incident was the 1938 radio broadcast of "The War of the Worlds" and the mass reaction of the American audience that thought it was real. In reality, this incident sparked research into the phenomenon and eventually showed that reactions depended on situational and attitudinal aspects of the various individual listeners.

The magic bullet theory is considered too cumbersome to test and offers inaccurate results. Modern researchers wanted more empirical explanations for the relationship between media and audience. Since media obviously did not turn the audience into unthinking drones, those studying the field sought a more definable reaction. Some groups still quote the theory to explain why certain audiences should not be exposed to certain media such as youth to comics in the 1950s or rap in the 2000s, reports Media Know All, "for fear that they will watch or read sexual or violent behavior[s] and will then act them out themselves."

A recent study by Monmouth University shows how 48% of Americans watch and consume news which is broadcasted in CNN. Shows how Magic bullet in the form of hypodermic needle (News of the West) is injected into the audience.

4. Methodology

The researcher had chosen qualitative analysis for the findings and results. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques- Content Analysis and Expert Interview. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research.

4.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method that may be used with either qualitative or quantitative data and in an inductive or deductive way. Qualitative content analysis is commonly used in nursing studies but little has been published on the analysis process and many research books generally only provide a short description of this method. When using content analysis, the aim was to build a model to describe the phenomenon in a conceptual form. Both inductive and deductive analysis processes are represented as three main phases: preparation, organizing and reporting.

The preparation phase is similar in both approaches. The concepts are derived from the data in inductive content analysis. Deductive content analysis is used when the structure of analysis is operationalized on the basis of previous knowledge (Satu Elo & HelviKynga 2007).

The researcher analysed selected news broadcasted in CNN and Al Jazeera on a particular day and established a difference between the two news.

4.2 Expert Interview

The researcher conducted expert interview through telephone and contacted Mr. Zakka Jacob, Editor in Chief, CNN IBN. The researcher posed two questions: 1) why there is this kind of domination in Western Media? What has led to this sort of Western Media hegemony? 2) How the global narrative in terms of news will affect the Balance of Power between Nations?

In reply to the first question he said, 'The reason why there seems to be a domination of western media is because media outlets like New York Times and CNN got into the business cycle of international news much before the others did. They had a natural advantage in that they were first movers who spoke in the lingua franca of the world, English. But lately others are catching up. The likes of Al Jazeera, Russia Today and CCTV are giving a non-western perspective to international news'

In reply to the second question he said, 'Balance of power between nations depends on economic, military and geo political power. Media and the ability to control the narrative is soft power, not hard power. Countries need to have hard power in terms of economic, military and geo political might. Soft power can only add to hard power. But soft power without hard power becomes meaningless'

5. Results and Findings

Through the methodologies (Content Analysis and expert interview) used the researcher found out that there is hegemony in Western Broadcast media and its affect. The researcher took incidents like Lebanon Suicide bombing, Syrian crisis to show how Western Broadcast media (CNN) choose to ignore these incidents and focused more on the news related to Donald Trump. Though the researcher with the help of inter coder reliability found out that the news related to Trump is of utmost importance to US and CNN but they should not forget and ignore the apathy going around Beirut and Syria.

5.1 Beirut Bombing on 22nd January 2017

5.1.1 Al Jazeera and CNN

The content shown in Al Jazeera on 23rd January 2017 was extensively about the bombings that took place in Beirut, Lebanon. The news agency chose to put this agenda as a news bulletin. The key points regarding the Beirut bombings highlighted in Al Jazeera were:

- In June 2016, the army said it had arrested supporters from a local affiliate of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) group, planning attacks against busy areas.
- Lebanon's National News Agency said the would-be attacker was wearing an explosive belt under his jacket, as he intended to blow himself up inside a Costa coffee shop on Hamra Street on Saturday evening.
- Saad Hariri, Lebanon's prime minister, congratulated security forces on their successful operation in a tweet: "Our unity protects the nation and the people," he said.
- Al Jazeera's Imtiaz Tyab, reporting from Beirut, said security services identified the suspect as a man in his 20s from Sidon in the country's south.
- The Daily Star newspaper reported that the cafe was filled with people socializing when the soldiers arrested the man at around 11pm local time

- Lebanon has been hit by a string of bomb attacks in recent years, some linked to the ongoing war in neighbouring Syria.

On the same day i.e. 23rd January 2017 CNN choose to ignore this news which was of utmost importance when it comes to killing of people and domestic disturbance. The main agenda for CNN on this day was the inaugural speech of US President Donald Trump. CNN reporter Carl Azuz and others were few reporters who analysed Trump's speech in this National media of US. The main highlights were:

"This Monday's special edition of CNN 10 reports on the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump and brings you an overview of related weekend events. We show you some highlights of his inaugural address, explore some constitutional trivia, and look at demonstrations across the U.S"

Followed by this introduction the news agency chose to discuss and analyse just the inaugural speech of Donald Trump. The official website of CNN had the whole speech transcript and the whole website just had Trump's speech and links to few other news like:

- Obama's legacy: He sparked hope -- and got blindsided
- Trump's speech proves why he is GOP's worst enemy
- Russians soak up 'power' of Siberian deer blood.

5.2 Bloodshed and killing of innocent in Syria on January 12th 2018

5.2.1 Al Jazeera vs CNN

The content shown in Al Jazeera on 12th January was on the Syrian Crisis and the apathy going on in the country. The main key points discussed on Al Jazeera were:

- The number of people killed in the Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta has reached 179 after a little over two weeks of government and Russian bombardment, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).
- Like in eastern Damascus, the Syrian government is trying to dislodge an array of rebel groups, but Idlib holds hegemony should end so that there is proper Balance of Power in broadcast media.
- Special significance for the opposition as one of its last remaining strongholds.
- The violence in Eastern Ghouta coincides with a government offensive in the northern province of Idlib where some estimates put the number of those who have fled fighting at 280,000.
- Syrian activists on social media have been posting images said to be from Eastern Ghouta, which show children being pulled out dead or heavily wounded from mounds of rubble.

On the same day CNN showed news regarding Trump's outrageous remark shows his affinity for the worst of America's past. The summary of the news excerpt was:

After his remark Thursday, the White House issued a statement that said, "Certain Washington politicians choose to fight for foreign countries," -- as if allowing people to come to a country built by immigrant amounts to disloyalty -- adding, "but President Trump will always fight for the American people," and claiming that the current programs, "allow terrorists into our country. He wants to make America his kind of great again, by taking it back to a time when most immigrants were white, when all decisions were made by coteries of wealthy white men, men who didn't have to worry about pesky women demanding equal treatment, and other minorities demanding.

6. Conclusion

The result and findings shows how Hegemony is rampant in Western Broadcast media and much importance and priority is given to the news headlines relating to US and its internal issues and conflict. It's completely understandable that CNN with its headquarters in Georgia is bound to broadcast news concerning their homeland but also it should break away from the hegemony and broadcast news which concerns the world and humanity. Thousands of people are in trouble in countries like Syria and Lebanon. There have been bombings everyday or the other but the domination of western broadcast media is still quite prevalent and to have a global news hub and a proper narrative in terms of news broadcast, the hegemony should end so that there is proper Balance of Power in broadcast media.

7. Limitations:

Due to paucity of time, the researcher could only choose two international broadcast channels to pursue a comparative study.

The researcher could not contact anyone from CNN and Al Jazeera.

8. Scope for further study:

It would be very interesting to conduct another study within the same area of research, with the incorporation of more news channels which can include Fox news, NBC news South Front etc which will give more integrated result to the topic and better utility to the concept of hegemony.

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