Tools of Modern Media Impact Forces:
Discourse, Language and Image

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Abstract

This work is an attempt to show the impact forces of modern media and their manipulation by influential groups and big powers to achieve specific goals particularly in developing societies. It argues analytically that modern media harnessed recent advances in technology and other relative disciplines to fabricate events and realities to persuade average individual and\or groups and defeat the opponents of the media's owners and\or controllers. It goes on to argue that it has become more persuasive than informative. It claims that peoples of industrial societies are much more aware of the impacts than their counterparts in agricultural ones of the third world for one obvious reason that the latter still suffer from the consequences of the colonial era. Therefore impacted parties, be they states or groups, have started awareness campaigns by holding various activities to counter the media action and behavior.

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أدوات القوى التأثيرية لوسائل الاعلام الجديد: اللغة والخطاب اليومي والصورة

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ملخص

يدور موضوع هذا البحث حول كيفية استغلال القوى التأثيرية لوسائل الاعلام الحديثة من طرف قوى النفوذ العالمية الكبرى لتحقيق ما يخصها من اهداف وخاصة في الدول النامية ومجتمعاتها الفقيرة. ويوضح هذا البحث بالتحليل كيفية توظيف التقدم الذي تم احرازه في ميدان التكنلوجيا الحديثة والعلوم ذات العلاقة لفبركة الاحداث والوقائع والمستجدات لإقناع الافراد العاديين والجماعات وللتغلب على الخصوم وتحقيق ما تريده القوى الكبرى في العالم. وذلك من خلال التركيز على اللغة والخطاب اليومي واستخدام الصورة. ويواصل البحث في تحليلاته بالقول ان اعمال و نشاطات وسائل الاعلام الحديثة اصبحت تهدف بشكل رئيسي الى الاقناع بدل ان توفر المواد الاعلامية بشكل محايد وغير منحاز لأي جهة. ومن النقاط المهمة التي تركز عليها هذا الورقة البحثية هي ان شعوب الدول الصناعية المتقدمة اصبحت بمرور الزمن اكثر وعيا بكثير من نظيراتها من شعوب الدول الزراعية الفقيرة بهذه التأثيرات التي تمارسها وسائل الاعلام الحديثة. ويرجع السبب في ذلك ان شعوب العالم الثالث الفقيرة لا تزال تعاني من تبعات الفترة الاستعمارية .

لذلك نرى ان بعض الاطراف الوطنية والمنظمات اخذت تسعى للقيام بحملات ونشطات توعوية متنوعة وهادفة للوقوف بوجه هذا المد الاعلامي التقني الجديد

Introduction

It is undeniably true that the media has been and still is an integral part of human life where modern technology is indispensable. Advancements in technology and other relative sciences like sociology and linguistics are not collateral- free and they are harnessed to serve some interests for variety of reasons. A considerable number of people particularly, in the developing countries is more or less unaware of the media impact forces for reasons of poverty, illiteracy mismanagement of national resources after the colonial era and desire of greed and continued supremacy by manipulators.

This paper is an attempt to show that along with the desired media impact forces, these forces have been manipulated by influential parties, be they individuals or states, to achieve specific goals for a variety of reasons.

To solve and find answers for this problem, this work depends on the analytical approach through which various authentic data is put to analysis. The data includes relevant academic works in the fields of communication, sociology, psychology, linguistics and technology. Also it is supported by media exemplifying works on recent political, social and cultural activities on the media impact forces.

Apart from the introduction and concluding remarks, the work is composed of seven related and progressive sections:

1. Mass Communication Impact forces
   - A brief account
   - The evolution of mass communication impact styles

2. Mass Communication and human cognition

3. The evolution of mass media methods of impact

4. Views on Mass Communication and Event Fabricating

5. The impact theories in social relations

6. Mass Media changing course

7. Modern media: Image and contents

Section One
Mass communication Impact Forces Brief Account

The forces of the mass communication impact depend on the capability and perfection in making use of the information related to the event. When that is achieved, it is easy for the financing and controlling parties of the media outlet to design their strategies serving their goals. In these days, these modern means of communication have been effective in drawing the masses attention to the problems and suggest solutions in compliance with these influential parties' goals. Equally they can divert attention from certain and unwanted players in the event. Through their persuasiveness, they can impart legality to illegal actions irrespective of right and wrong. (1)

Besides, their impact is noticeable in:

- Political decision making related to the international relations,
- Consumer tastes and economic marketing,
- Promoting democratic practices and raising funds for election candidates,
- Marketing expertise, skills, practices and disseminating new ideas for development and change in societies,
- Formulating the public opinion in a way to support stands by governments, parties , societies and organizations in different circumstances,
- Mobilizing societies to face crises,
- Participating in changing and formulating customs and cultural conventions,
- Participating in the development of education and increasing knowledge.

B-The evolution of mass communication impact styles

The impacts of the mass communication forces have been felt clearly in modern societies immediately after the advancements in technology. The latter has helped to open many new horizons for man and revolutionize human life positively or negatively (2).

The impacts of the mass communication forces in general can be affected and felt in the processes of reading, listening and watching by the individual within his\her social cell and also in the public opinion in society.

Researchers agree that there is a vital link between mass communication and individuals separately or collectively in ethical or sectarian terms. Therefore, the developments in the technological fields have been important in increasing the impact of the mass media forces and being employed in international strategies. That is because the impacts are usually measured by the quantity and quality of information and by the medium's credibility. (3)

It should be mentioned here that the impacts of the mass communication forces is a complex process and depend on the following:

- The plausibility and feasibility of the message. It should be acceptable and in compliance with the individual realities,
- The message contents: there must be a link between the contents of the message and the issues related to the impact goals of the programs in the general plan of the outlet,
- The clarity of the message: the message should be clear, direct, easily interpretable and decipherable,
- The compatibility of the message with the social, cultural and educational awareness of the audience,
- Careful planning in producing and spreading the message: messages should be prepared according to norms agreed upon according to scientific and academic studies,
- Impact progression: successful media campaigns need gradual transition,
- Good message formulating : a message is well received and successful when it is well formulated and meets the standards of good audience reception,
- Type of the medium conveying the contents of the message: McLuhan once said: the medium is the message. (4) To

exemplify this: A bad sport match is more interesting than a good radio one.

Section Two
Mass Communication and Human Cognition

The impacts forces of the mass communication depend on technological devices, artistic styles, mental contents and psychological factors. The latter can be noticed through the audience readiness to be influenced and be responsive to the message. The response could be either explicit or implicit determined by the individual behavior and his\her different stands.

As for the mechanism of the impact, it can be determined by three ways according to Denis Mc Quail (5) :

Interest ----→ cognition ----→ taking stand\reaction;

In this work, it is believed the process of mass communication impact and audience being influenced by them are more complicated than that hypothesized by Denis McQuail because there are seven basic perception stages that cannot be ignored in this process of impact ranging from the environment, through the past memories to his\her behavior in the social environment in response to the message as shown below:

Message→ attention→ interest→ interpreting →cognition→ Understanding→ reaction

These stages are interrelated to complete the process because the attention and the degree of concentration depend on the nature of the medium, its technical styles and the type of the contents.
Attention is a mental process determining either the degree of interest and follow-up or discontinuity of communication. The only way to perceive, understand, react properly and interact with a message positively or negatively is to decipher it and analyses its contents.

Section Three
The evolution of mass media of impact

The types of the modern media discourse are no longer spontaneous or emotional but they are the outcome of serious research works and academic studies. There have been professional styles to formulate messages with persuasive semantic implications and purposeful sense of direction to affect change in the public

opinion. The contents of each discourse are directed to meet specific needs, wishes, and instincts and thoughts to achieve specific responses about a topic, event or an issue.

Through discourse the media persons are able these days to manipulate people hearts and minds by targeting the following:

- The people sentiment: it is the easiest and commonest way followed by the mass communication media to influence audiences because emotion-based media programs are well received by the majority of audiences particularly youths and children. It is a way preferred by dreaming and hopeful people.
- People minds: it is one of the serious ways of dealing with audiences. Programs based on the audience minds are well received by specialists, the elderly and business people
- The sentiment through mind: the media items of this type are usually moderate because they combine between sentiments and mental needs. They are well received by adults.
- The mind through the sentiment: this type is attempting and captive way which could be used to target most social categories but mostly pragmatic-minded people. That is because there is high percentage of recipients who don't tend to accept direct and serious messages unless these include emotional implications capturing the audience and exposing it to the serious ideas. Youths are the most responsive social category of this type.

It must be mentioned here that targeting the emotions may not need more efforts than using reiteration and diversification of expressions and phrases because suspense and temptation are much needed here as the case with Western commercial channels. As for those targeting the minds, they need references, fact and figures. Similarly they need reiteration ad diversification to achieve persuasion.

Section Four
Views on Mass Communication and Events Fabricating

It should be mentioned here that the mass communication has both constructive and destructive impact forces and the ensuing

consequences depend on the goals and functions defined by the people in charge of each media outlet. The resultant advantages and disadvantages have been subjected to many research works by researchers who are interested in impacts of the mass media individually or collectively. Many of these works have come up with various and different views. These views fall within three categories:

- The first category tends to believe that the media covers events objectively. They carried out a number of functions like informing, notifying, entertaining, instructing, warning and cautioning. By so doing their impact forces participate in the comprehensive development and therefore the media here is constructive though it has few disadvantages which cannot abolish its advantages or downplay them.

    They maintain that the impact forces of the media particularly the audio-visual one has topped the list of influence and been able to dominate the minds and behavior of the youths. People have become more interested in the audio visual media and this bears witness that the impact forces become highly important.

- The second category thinks that the mass media has become both events maker and crises maker. They upgrade and magnify trivial events to serve their goals and downgrade and marginalize significant events to deceive the public opinion. By so doing they have become destructive and their disadvantages exceed and outnumber their advantages. The advocates of this view claim that the spread of many undisciplined TV space channels bears witness for the destructive media impact forces. This is usually done by airing media items which are damaging for most social categories in society.

    It is worth mentioning here that most of the media items shown by these channels call individuals and groups to abandon solid social customs and values allegedly to be in compliance with modernity and civility. This, in turn, led to

destroy the social fabric in the developing countries, as they argue.

- The third category: the advocates of this category believe that modern mass media impacts contributed in changing modern life aspects. The destinations of change depend on the ability and perfection of using the capabilities of these media means and also depend on the nature of the targets specified by the media people. The latter can harness the media either in service of social development during peace time or psychologically and deceptively during war time.

Section Five
The Impact Theories in Social Relations

Modern technological inventions and the international media strategic plans in modern times are based on scientific theories and on the results of advanced research works which have started seriously and comprehensively since last century. Some of these inventions are based on assumptions by sociologists who claim that individuals in modern societies have similar characteristics but with no social ties. This, therefore, requires changes in existing conventional patterns of social relations through modern means of impact which could either strengthen or weaken them.

There are other prominent theoretical and field studies came up with other results which indicate that individuals are not similar in behavioral and social characteristics and can be classified in specific social categories. That is despite the fact that they share some social variables which influence them according to their characteristics like race, religion, sect and place of residence (6).

Besides, a number of sociologists like Spencer, and Durkheim(7) claim that contemporary civilizational developments led to new social relations in the new social system which is of two parts according to them into:

- The first part includes \represents the agricultural societies whose members have strong social ties based on family and blood relations , conventional loyalties, long residence on specific piece of land. It is difficult to affect changes in the

life of these communities in the same way and degree as in industrial societies. That is because the former resist changes in their social systems since they adhere to their social systems and spiritual values.

- The second part is represented by new industrial societies living in towns and cities which inherited their conventional weak relations and combine them with new materialistic ones like the those relations of common interests, mutual benefits and professional and party ties.

Here one may argue that relations in industrial societies are changeable and can be influenced through personal and mass communication by the ruling classes or people who control the impact forces. Big and influential industrial states with big international media foundations help to accelerate the process of change in societies, as civil societies started to expand in the world and swallow the agricultural ones with unchangeable and strong relations. This materialistic –based process was spread in non-industrial societies through the media by governments of these states through affecting changes in their political, economic and social systems in order to serve the interests of the big states.

For the above reasons the big industrial states have been able to come up with new social relations and systems to their societies by unifying their educational curricula and by introducing all the requirements which can achieve cohesion and harmony to achieve social stability. The latter helps to cement the political and economic stability which is the base of changes. Equally these big states made efforts to combat all elements of unification in these developing societies by unbalancing their social values and destroying their social fabric as is the case in Arab societies.

It should be mentioned here that the latest of these inclinations are based on scientific theories and accurate central planning of the impact activities. The planners made use of these campaigns to develop the theories of cohesion and selective sensual cognition which came into existence in middle of the 19th century. These theories are based on the assumption that people wish to have

unified and cohesive believes and judgments because any perceptive disagreement on believes or judgments among individuals of the same society consequently will lead to fragmentation, disintegration, conflict, laziness and vulnerability. This, in turn, will undermine the stability of their societies.

To deal with the ensuing consequences of the cognitive dissonance, Leon Festinger theory (9) can be useful in this regard which claims that in order to ease disagreement and dissonance which cause disintegration in believes, judgment and action, people must be exposed to cohesive information, ideas and judgments in compliance with their ideas and actions and to distract them the controversial ideas

John Martin(10) commented on the relation between social cohesion and mass communication by saying that the cohesion theories used Lasswell communication model (11) as a perfect opener. Accordingly, instead of raising the questions: who? Say what? In which channel? To whom? And with what effect? , the question being asked these days is: who need the message and let him have it and from whom?

Here the focus was on the request to hold the talks and negotiations on the information instead of sending the instructions and the need for quick public opinion changing.

Martin added that there has become a clearer distinction between informed media and persuasive media in the implications of mass media impacts in modern societies

Practically speaking this means the mass communication theories are based on communication patterns including Lasswells' who affirms that they have played persuasive role in negotiations and dialogue instead of the previous ways. Those unidirectional methods depend on notifying where the recipient has no role in what he reads listens and watches. Through these means the recipient began to distinguish between the informative media and persuasive media. Any way the media is still controlled by those who finance and instruct them.

The functions of modern media harness the scientific and industrial progress to achieve various goals like the following

- Producing effective media discourse backing an issue, a stand or a trend,
- Introducing contents based on good linguistic structure where language is being manipulated to serve the purposes required,
- Employing image and language to solidify the contents,
- Fabricating unreal events or states,
- Supporting linguistic and technological audio-visual tools with solid thoughts,
- Persuading the audience through language and image during global events and crises,

Section 6
Mass Media changing course

After the West embracing the market economy, the event coverage functions of the media have been converted to crises creating. This led to impacts on social and cultural changes and to technical and technological developments particularly in the field of media and information. Media influential people were to great extent enabled to employ these developments and changes to achieve the goals drawn up by the decision makers and the financing parties.

The media people therefore can create crises and spread rumors supported by fabricated images to persuade the audience. Images can be manipulated for deceptive and distractive purposes.

In advanced societies, modern media has been associated with fabrication and reality masking. It has been also used in marketing and promoting, goods and services and in crises management in order to back the strategic plans in politics, economy, culture and art. These developments have negative effects on the societies of developing countries which lack the ability to have or use perfectly these technologies. This is accompanied with the absence of media strategic planning in these poor countries. Consequently, foundations in developing countries held symposiums and scientific conferences to discuss the new realities of the media like the one held in Syria under the banner: how the media has converted from event covering to event making. The symposium

focused on the following

- Modern media has targeted the political, cultural and economic aspects of human life to redraw them in the region to serve the interests of the great powers,
- Modern media has impacts on world decision making and directs foreign policies,
- Foreign media has not to come to the Arab region to cover the events but to influence the making of events according to its norms. It either magnifies irrelevant events or underplays serious ones,
- War these days are launched and fought on the screens before they break out on ground and skies,
- The technological advancement in the media frame worked nations and detached them from their national identities. They are either be isolated or follow the impacting patterns,
- Arab satellite channels account only for 8% of the total world ones, according to some recent studies on space channels. State- run TV channels still have not changed their reporting styles while the private ones copying western styles,
- Modern changes in international community led to view political works, arts and thought as goods and the same applies to the media and advertisement. As for the news and information flow, Western agencies like Reuters, Associated Press, United Press and the AFP control 80% of the news and information while those of the developing countries control only 20%. State-run outlets still keep the old styles in dealing with media items while private space channels are copying western ones. Still worse if we know the developing countries that accounts for 70% of the world population own only 17% of the newspaper in the world and 18% of radio transmission and 12% of TV transmission (12).

A Congress report on 27th of June 1993 said that America can win the media war through dealing directly with peoples of states not with their governments by making use of modern communication technologies (13)

Section seven
Modern Media: Image and Contents
Modern technology has enabled users to manipulate images to suit the event positively or passively. So is the case with semiotics which enables users to turn information upside down to suit its purposes, modern media has been able to falsify realities and convince the public opinion. Here are a couple of examples:

- Modern media was able to convince the world public opinion that Iraq owned weapons of mass destruction through language and images.

- Modern media claimed that Jewish civilians are the victims of the Israeli-Arab struggle. During each confrontation between the two sides images unconsciously pinpoint the Israel aggressor while political commentators and analysts try to twist the facts and figures to prove the opposite.

Concluding Remarks

- The 2- tier weapon of modern media can be clearly and readily felt in agricultural societies of developing countries and manipulated by big powers particularly by their influential corporations for one obvious reason: these peoples are the least aware of its impact forces,

- In industrial countries where democracy rules, on the other hand, peoples are much aware and some groups there are publically resistant protesting occasionally against the media subversive actions and behavior,

- Modern media is no longer informative only. Besides and when needed, it employs its means of persuasion and interruption by magnifying irrelevant events or by playing down and downsizing vital essential happenings,

- After the end of the colonial era, a number of changes and developments occurred in the societies of the developing world. Sociologist noticed that migration from the countryside towards towns and cities is one of these and, as a result, there have been some social changes in the strength of social relations at both the individual and group levels. Media

persons and influential groups have made good use of these observations

- Language particularly semiotics have been more effectively used by the media aided by the advances in the visual media field.

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