

Research paper on does the pursuit of profit by media corporations affect the pol...

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Way that Politics is Reported in a Western Liberal Democracy?

In any liberal or democratic state, the role of media has always been pivotal in politics. To certain extent, media's power and ubiquitousness have made them more lucrative especially during elections or in times of national political scandals (such as the impeachment of then U. S. President Bill Clinton). Think about any national media outfit and how it has played the vital role in the political process and activities of a country. For instance, think about how the U. S. national media outfits such as CNN, ABC, CBS, PBS, NPR, WaPo, and New York Times supported the candidacy of Barack Obama during the 2008 elections. (Shenk, 2012, p. 1) The revelations will suggest how powerfully the media portrayed and conveyed President Obama and it has a positive reception from public.

Media is a kingmaker. In other words, it is a group which significantly influences a political succession, even when it is not directly involved as a political candidate. (BBC News, 2010) Kingmakers, like media, use political, monetary, religious, and/or military instruments to influence the winners. They are powerful in on their own right and they can interpret events according to their own dispositions. In other words, media can support and pursue politics and politicians not as an advocacy or the pursuit of truth but more for profit. (Andersen & Strate, 2000, p. 24) They can use monetary and other influences to enhance or salvage their " clients'" public image while at the same time, they can also derive money and influence out of this

patronage. This is a vicious cycle in a democratic society where free press is highly valued and institutionalized. (2000, p. 25)

Generally, the ownership and management of media and communications, including new media platforms such as internet websites, blog sites, social media networks, etc., has pervasive effects on the character of political news, public debate, attitudes of the people on socio political issues, and the other outcomes of several political perceptions, actions and practices. (Cohen, Tsfaty & Sheaffer, 2008, p. 334) As corporate entities, most media corporations are concerned with their profits and ratings. (Andersen & Strate, 2000, p. 23) Hence, the ethical baseline of the way they present facts and stories may be influenced by how their bottom lines will be affected. This is a pernicious problem because media is basically driven by profits and how they influence and control the public opinions and political actions is very direct. (2000, p. 26) At the heart of this problem is how they present political events and situations and how public receive it.

In the following section, we shall see the internal agenda of media and how it is evidenced in their new reporting in the pretense of a free press and fair media practices. This paper shall specifically focus on how media corporations (news papers, television networks, radio broadcast stations, etc.) are influenced in the way they report politics in western, democratic societies. It shall make use of finer illustrations to show how political news and reports are influenced by how media corporations conceive political news and events in relation to their profitability and other material incentives.

Media's Commercialized Orientations

There is no denying that large, multinational corporations control media through the money they supply by way of advertising. (Andersen & Strate, 2000, p. 8) Media rely on the thousands of dollars which these global corporations pay them. As an outcome, media is used as an institutionalized instrument by which commercial enterprises control most of the information supplied to the public. Aside from commercial entities, political organizations also recognize the importance of media in their campaigns and political goals. Primarily, they need media's vital support in order to win elections. (Lane, 2007, p. 1)

According to Louw (2005, p. 12), various election cycles have shown the powerful influence of the large media corporations on the results of political elections. Each corporate media outfit supports their own candidates. They control or manage the flow of information in their news and reports in favor of their candidates. Cohen, Tsfaty & Sheaffer (2008, p. 332) note that politicians are inherently attracted to media since they always want to highlight what they do. Mainstream media play on this electoral requirement and amass large amounts of money from politicians and their supporters during electoral campaigns. On the other hand, media also plays a crucial role in controlling the negative news about politicians and not very much on what they positively do. (Lane, 2007, p. 1) In both orientations, media plays a significant part and this is evidenced by how they interpret and report political news with their own political biases and preferences.

The Jeremiah Project Website (2011, p. 1) cites media's political biases and how it affects their functions through the example of Mr. Ron Paul, a lone U. S. presidential candidacy in the 2008 national elections. The website criticized that the issue of real political change was heavily influenced by media and they concentrated on Obama's type of change. It depicted how media "marginalized" the message of change by Mr. Ron Paul by censoring it in public discourses. Media blacklisted Mr. Paul's real change message or campaign and his political message was blocked from the public airwaves. (2011, p. 1) The media exposure given to him during the primary debate was also very short compared to the massive campaigns given to Obama and the other candidates. It implies how the greater financial stakes are directing these media corporations to deliver political events as they favor it.

What Media does for Politics and Money

In 2008, the press secretary of the former U. S. George W. Bush, Scott McClellan published a book wherein he confessed that he "regularly and routinely but unknowingly pass various lies to the media, after being instructed by his superiors." (McClellan, 2008, p. 8) This shows how media report political lies as political facts. McClellan defended the press as "generally honest and intent on telling the truth" but he also said that media can be deferential especially when it comes to sensitive matters such as the Iraq War (2008, p. 9)

Harvard University's Joan Shorenstein Center, together with the Project for Excellence in Journalism, conducted a joint study which revealed important truths about media influence on politics. (Weatherly, et al., 2007, p. 97) It

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showed that the three major U. S. networks had a disparate treatment of Republican and Democratic candidates in the five months of presidential primaries during the 2007 elections. It revealed that the CNN programs under study seemed to negatively portray the Republican candidates with a concrete margin of three-to-one. CNN also portrayed the three main candidates negatively.

According to Stetka, (2012, p. 1), privately-owned news media companies propagandize the commercial and political interests of the global companies which own and support them. To name a few, NBC is owned by General Electric, CBS is owned by the Westinghouse Electric Company, Disney owns ABC, News Corporation, Ltd. Owns Fox Networks, among others. (The Jeremiah Project, 2011, p. 1) Large business organizations such as the Bilderberg Group, Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission control the global flow of information. (p. 1) As such, all the political news and events shown on TV or heard on radios or seen as printed materials and even those released through the Internet are controlled by these powerful commercial establishments.

These have grave implications with the consideration of the following information:

The General Electric is a major contributor to the Republican Party. This global company has major commercial stakes in finance, weapons manufacturing, nuclear power and various other industries. Fox International also has a wide worldwide satellite and cable networks which include the British Sky Broadcasting, Canal Fox, Latin America, FOXTEL, Australia, STAR

TV, Asia, VOX, Germany, IskyB, India, Bahasa Programming Ltd., Indonesia, and News Broadcasting, Japan. It has also bought the Wall Street Journal to this very large media conglomerate. FOX News Channel has direct ties to the U. S. Republican Party.

In another illustration, Fox has started a deliberate campaign throughout its network to advocate the reality of global warming to the general public. This has been achieved by incorporating the powerful message or reality through the popular TV characters. As an example, the network wrote for The Simpsons to reflect specific tenants of the global warming manifesto. (The Jeremiah Project, 2011, p. 1)

Conclusion

In the previous decades, the lines between advertising, propaganda, advertising and public relations have become unclear while the functions and agenda of the public institutions and private enterprises have also become sophisticatedly integrated. In most democracies, media have played a pivotal role in sustaining and managing the status quo through its mighty media machineries and instruments. While the perception of the general public remains, the evolution of media has made it very susceptible to commercialism and profiteering in the accomplishment of its functions and accountabilities.

While this paper does not generalize all of the free press in the democratic societies, it makes a clear description of how large multinational companies involve media and how media, in turn, cater to the political actors and

institutions. Each of these so called democratic institutions feed on each other to maintain status quo or pursue specific and elite agenda.

News media corporations are heavily affected by the profit motives and these are seen by the way they report political news and events. They serve as international propaganda machines that influence how the public think and perceive the various social, political and economic events happening in their own societies.

Media permissibly influence public opinion and the voting public by feeding them the stories which they prioritize as important and news worthy. The political biases and preferences and the overt influences of media are very clear. Media companies have very powerful influence in politics, electoral campaigns and electoral processes by enforcing what issues and topics are relevant and the criteria to evaluate these news.

The media also affect the way government governs. Primarily, this is shown by how they make winners out of political candidates. By reporting or not reporting certain aspects of the political candidates' lives and actions, they manage how the voting public will perceive these politicians. Media also has the power to craft their ways in order to make these politicians win in an election. Hence, they are called kingmakers.

Democratic societies urgently need to reexamine how they portray and patronize their traditional institutions and values such as free press. They need to be aware of the evil that portends beneath the dynamic relationship between media, politics and government and how each one play a vital life

support system to one another. Their mutually benefitting relationships may prove to be very harmful to western, liberal societies yet the people do not urgently conceive it.

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