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Media Imperialism, Propaganda and Politics: Its' Impacts in Third World Countries

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#### **Abstract**

The global media landscape is a multifaceted arena where Western media exerts significant influence, particularly impacting developing nations. This research investigates the intricate dynamics of this influence, examining the interplay between power, politics, propaganda, and decision-making processes. Through a comprehensive analysis of secondary sources, the study uncovers deliberate policies aimed at exporting Western media models and values to Third World markets. It also elucidates the multifaceted nature of propaganda, wielded by both state and non-state actors to manipulate information and shape public opinion. Furthermore, the research highlights the imbalance in global news coverage, with developing nations disproportionately affected by selective reporting and distortion of events. The findings underscore the pervasive influence of Western media imperialism and its consequential impact on public perception and political agendas in developing countries. Moving forward, the study advocates for promoting media pluralism, enhancing media literacy, and fostering critical engagement with information sources to mitigate the adverse effects of Western media imperialism and propaganda. By fostering a more nuanced understanding of media dynamics, policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society can work towards advancing democratic values and fostering equitable global discourse.

**Keywords:** Decision-making processes, Developing countries, Global news coverage, Media imperialism, Political agendas, Propaganda

**Declaration:** There is no any interest of conflicts.

#### Introduction

The global media landscape is a complex arena where power, politics, and influence intersect, often with profound consequences for developing nations. This research aims to delve into the multifaceted relationship between Western media and these regions, exploring the dynamics of influence, propaganda, and political manoeuvring that shape public opinion and decision-making processes.

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From deliberate policies aimed at exporting American media models and values to the deliberate manipulation of information to serve political agendas, the impact of Western media on developing countries cannot be overstated. Ginneken (1998) suggests that major firms, government organizations, and military establishments actively promote the penetration of Third World markets, while Dill (1986) argues for a more balanced portrayal of global events by media in developed nations. 'As cited by Keller, D.2004 by *Bring'em on* "How were the American people prepared for the war on Iraq? How have political agents and media gatekeepers sought to develop public support for the first preventive war of the modern age? On highlights the complex links between media and politics, analysing how communication practices are modified in times of crisis to protect political interests or implement political goals (Kellner, 2004)". "Even *The New York Times* fell for rank propaganda and declined to consult experts on ridiculous claims about Iraq's supposed nuclear capability" (Deknatel, 2023)".

Propaganda, a powerful tool wielded by both state and non-state actors, further complicates the media landscape. As Gelders and Ihlen (2010) outline, propaganda takes various forms—black, white, and grey—each with its own objectives and methods. This raises critical questions about the ethical conduct of media and the role of propaganda in shaping public perception and political agendas'.

Moreover, the imbalance in global news coverage perpetuates a cycle of misinformation and distortion, disproportionately affecting developing nations. The selective reporting of events, as evidenced by the stark difference in media coverage between incidents in communist and non-communist states (Downing, Ali, & Annabelle, 1995), underscores the need for a critical examination of media practices and their implications.

Against this backdrop, this research seeks to unravel the intricate connections between Western media influence, propaganda, and political agendas in developing countries. By analysing case studies and scholarly perspectives, we aim to shed light on the mechanisms through which media shape's public opinion, influences decision-making processes, and perpetuates global power imbalances. Through this exploration, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the intersection of media, politics, and development.



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# **Objectives**

- 1. To study the influence of western media on developing countries.
- 2. To evaluate the impact of media propaganda on building public opinion, political agendas and decision-making process.
- 3. To analyze the use of media as a tool for political and ideological influence while assessing the imbalance in global news coverage and its impacts on developing nations.

## Methodology

This qualitative research employs a comprehensive analysis of secondary sources to explore the evolution of media into a tool of imperialism, focusing on historical to present-day incidents. Drawing from published books that provide a historical context and scholarly insights into the phenomenon, this study synthesizes information from a range of sources to trace the trajectory of Western media influence on developing countries. Additionally, published reports and documented incidents are integrated into the study to provide real-world examples and case studies that illustrate the impact of media imperialism on public opinion, political agendas, and decision-making processes in developing nations. Moreover, the adopted research design has been descriptive since it is associated with identifying the various characteristics of media imperialism, propaganda and politics.

## Literature Review

Major firms, government organizations, and the military establishment, according to Ginneken (1998, p. 42), have a deliberate policy to encourage the penetration of Third World and other international markets in order to encourage the introduction of American media models and values there. The western media were financially independent and working in the capacity of a fourth estate of state in the early nineteenth century whereas Nepal's media hinders behind to achieve the position of a fourth estate even at the down of twenty-first century because of financial dependency (IIDS, 1996). The media industry has also been impacted by the nation's dire financial circumstances.

"For instance, the Voice of America was supported by the American State Department and its U.S. Information Agency. Radio Moscow, Radio Peking, and Radio Havana were available in the communist nations. The United States has recently attempted to topple the Castro government by transmitting television into Cuba via Radio Marti. It is true that the reception of Western European television in Eastern Europe, both public service and commercial, considerably aided the fall of the Soviet Empire (Ginneken, 1998).



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According to Dill (1986), the media in the developed world should devote more time and space to covering news and providing background information on foreign nations in general, as well as news from the developing world in particular. He also says that to fix the current imbalance in news reporting, developing nations needs to strengthen their media. Additionally, the media in the industrialized countries can help address these imbalances. (Dill, 1986, pp. 157-158).

Warren Breed (1955), as cited in Wood & Edwards (1999) interpreted media as magic mirror. Media makes small things big and big things small in some events; so are called magic mirror. He had compared media with three terms to prove them as magic mirror. There is one form of actual media bias. Almost all media outlets need audiences in order to exist. Some can't survive financially without an audience; others want the prestige that comes from attracting a big audience (Hershey, 2020). Thus, the media define as "news" the kinds of stories that will attract an audience: those that feature drama, conflict, engaging pictures and immediacy. Hershey (2020) adds that that's what most people find interesting. They don't want to read a story headlined "Dog bites man." They want "Man bites dog."

Western Media and Africa: Poncian (2015) said that 'throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, European colonial powers propagated unfavorable stereotypes about Africa in order to defend their actions and hegemony over the continent. However, the author noted that other reasons could be more to blame for the phenomena than the European representation of Africans, given that these unfavorable views continue to exist in the twenty-first century' (p 74). 'Indeed, a number of academics have put up many explanations for why derogatory, centuries-old depictions of Africa persist in Western culture' (Oguh, 2015).

These are that the media are highly politicized, they are market force and have vested interest. Because of these, media sometimes manipulate the information. There may be difference between reality and presentation of media. All types of media across the planet give priority to political news in the context of volume of space given, time allocation and coverage frequency. The media plays a large role in influencing the government's agenda through spotlighting issues and directing public and political concerns. Wood & Edwards (1999) explains that media influences policymakers because "the public's familiarity with political matters is closely related to the amount and duration of attention these affairs receive in the mass media. Media from any country select and repeat the stories of rival nations so that they could criticize, defame and misinform the general public.



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"Media choose the news stories on a highly politicized basis rather than their relevance and depth. In 1984, Father Popieluszko, a revered and committed supporter of Polish Solidarity, was abducted in Warsaw, tortured and assassinated by a Police secret police cell. This horrific incident was reported tremendously in the US media. The New York Times wrote 78 articles and 3 editorials; Time and Newsweek, combined, ran 16 stories; and 46 news items televised by CBS News. Yet even more horrific incident of 100 monks, nuns and other religious staff in which agents of U.S. client regimes in Latin America assassinated those during the period 1964-1980 gained even less media attention. It was a strong sign that, as exposed by media coverage, indignant victims in a friendly state were rated at less than one hundredth of deserving victims in a communist state (Downing, Ali, & Annabelle, 1995)." Different media scholars stated the press theories differently. The agenda-setting theory says that the media (especially the news media) are not always successful at telling us what to think, but they are quite successful at telling us what to think about (McCombs, 1972; Shaw, 1973, as cited in Debanjan, 2010, p. 120).

"Military strategists frequently attacked radio and television broadcasting facilities during the NATO-Yugoslavia war in 1999, according to Picard (2008), in order to restrict Slobadan Milosevic's government's ability to communicate in public. The Prevention of Terrorism Act was previously used by the British government to censor the speech of IRA (Irish Republican Army) leaders, the Sinn Fein political branch, and supporters of the movement. Following the implementation of the control policy, IRA or Sinn Fein leaders, spokespeople, or even their followers were unable to appear on British television or radio. Denying the Holocaust or downplaying the crimes done during World War II was prohibited in many European nations. In this context, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain worth mentioning" (Picard, 2008)".

As a term, propaganda undermines professionalism in public relations. Unlike public relations, propaganda has been very quick in adapting to modern communication, which allows it to increase in influence and sophistication (Wadsworth, 2006, p. 8, as cited in Hopkins, 2015). This is not surprising, as public relations and other forms of strategic communication devise rules of ethical conduct prior to engaging the world with new forms of media. Without ethical rules of conduct, propaganda undercuts decision-making (Gelders & Ihlen, 2010, p. 60, as cited in Hopkins, 2015). When examining the differences between power-based and value-based PR, propaganda would be considered the former because it undermines ethics to implicitly or explicitly exercise its power towards a specific audience (Hopkins, 2015).



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Much like how PR has power-based and value-based subdivisions, propaganda has three major subdivisions: black propaganda, white propaganda and grey propaganda. Black propaganda "typically has a false source and contains lies and deceptions" (Gelders & Ihlen, 2010, pp. 59-62). White propaganda is just the opposite because it correctly identifies its source and contains accurate information "(Gelders & Ihlen, 2010, p. 60). Hopkins (2015) says that grey propaganda would likely be used in covert operations, as the information may purposely be missing to prevent the divulgement of sensitive information. An example of propaganda would include terrorism. Terrorism falls under propaganda because it seeks to undermine the political system, crosses party issues, and has objectives that are echoed through the mass media to influence the public (Richards, 2004, pp. 169-170). Terrorism could be considered black, white or grey propaganda.

When false information is circulated regularly, it may become accepted wisdom. Small (1974, p. 1) writes, "If Karl Marx could speak from his grave, the sober German would be expected to comment that television, not religion, is now the opiate of the masses" in reference to the omnipresence and its detrimental effects of the mass media (Small, 1974, p. 1).

Decisions are influenced by media because media is a system to marginalize and control their public. Media give us biased and manipulated information. Propaganda is to democracy what violence is to dictatorships. States, once they cannot force their people to act in their interests through violent oppression, are forced to manipulate the viewpoint of the masses so that masses accept to their actions without resistance (Edwards, 1998).

Many influential nations intervene secretly with funding in the media sector of developing and underdeveloped countries so they can monitor and manipulate the media contents. "When Fidel Castro toppled a U.S. backed dictator in 1959 and took control of Cuba's government, the U.S. launched an unbroken propaganda war. Television Marti and Radio Swan, funded by the CIA, work against the Communist law for propaganda purposes in that Cuba is off the state of Florida. These media campaigns don't express unbiased news but misinformation (Nicholas, 2008)."

In the political sphere there is a heavy effect of media goods, and vice versa. There are so many consequences in politics as a result of the media coverage, and there are also strong impacts of politics when reports and viewpoints are hunted, gathered, restructured, and disseminated. But politics weighs more on media than media on politics. Gerges (1999) explains as "the political process is more likely to have an influence on the news media than the news media on the political process." Kharel (2012) argues that "Politicians cultivate journalists at the first stage. If they fail to achieve their purpose, they try to buy them off.



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If this tactic, too, does not work, the criminal-minded one orders henchmen to bump them off. While politics is a necessary game in a democracy and one that involves its entire citizenry in one way or another, in our mega-society many must play it vicariously. For most of its participants, it also is a spectator sport, courtesy of the mass media (Martin, 1976: vii, as cited in Kharel, 2012).

The relationship between politics and the media is power one, and this has two dimensions: there is power over the media — what is shown or reported, and there is media power — what is being changed by the media (Street, 2001, p. 4). He further clarifies that if the media does not simply mirror or distill reality, if it imposes on the world certain biases or stories, then it is necessary to investigate who is the beneficiary and who is to be blamed for the result. One obvious answer is to look at those with a direct interest in the outcome, the ones with the most to gain: governments, parties, politicians.

# Findings and discussion

The research delved into the intricate dynamics of Western media influence, propaganda, and political manoeuvring in developing countries, revealing a complex web of interactions with profound implications. Through a comprehensive analysis of secondary sources spanning historical to present day incidents, several key findings emerged.

Firstly, In order to transfer American media patterns and ideals to Third World markets, the research first explained the purposeful practices of large corporations, governmental bodies, and military structures. This highlighted the systemic attempts to spread Western narratives around the world. The widespread impact of Western media on influencing public opinion and decision-making processes in developing countries is highlighted by this hegemonic agenda. African content was portrayed as a hopeless continent (Ough, 2015), and during the Gulf War (1991), "Even The New York Times fell for rank propaganda and declined to consult experts on ridiculous claims about Iraq's supposed nuclear capability" (Deknatel, 2023). Western media played market penetration even with the might of the military. In light of this incident, Western media propaganda was deemed to be more effective in attaining hegemonic goals.

Furthermore, the research uncovered the multifaceted nature of propaganda, which permeates media landscapes in various forms—black, white, and grey—each with distinct objectives and methods.



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Propaganda emerged as a powerful tool wielded by both state and non-state actors to manipulate information, shape public perception, and advance political agendas, thereby exacerbating global power imbalances a lively example of Iraq war, as mentioned by .

Moreover, the study revealed the imbalance in global news coverage, with developing nations disproportionately affected by selective reporting and distortion of events Warren Breed (1955), as cited in Wood & Edwards (1999) interpreted media as magic mirror. Media makes small things big and big things small in some events; so are called magic mirror. How to report on the issue in favours of their masters are clearly visible in the world arena, the stark difference in media coverage between incidents in communist and non-communist states underscored the need for a critical examination of media practices and their implications on public opinion and political agendas.

'Media has been influencing to the people to think about not telling what to think (especially the news media) (McCombs, 1972; Shaw, 1973, as cited in Debanjan, 2010,' with this it is clearly visible to influence the people and the government, particularly to the government of developing and under developed countries.

Overall, the findings highlight the pervasive influence of Western media imperialism, the insidious nature of propaganda, and the consequential impact on public opinion, political agendas, and decision-making processes in developing countries.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this research underscores the imperative of addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by Western media influence, propaganda, and political manoeuvring in developing countries. The pervasive nature of these phenomena perpetuates global power imbalances, distorts public perception, and undermines democratic processes.

Moving forward, concerted efforts are needed to promote media pluralism, enhance media literacy, and foster critical engagement with information sources. By fostering a more nuanced understanding of media dynamics and their implications, policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society can work towards mitigating the adverse effects of Western media imperialism and propaganda on developing nations, thereby advancing democratic values and fostering equitable global discourse.



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#### Recommendations

- The media should be in favour of the people and development for their wellbeing, not
  to destabilized the social harmony and fulfilling the hegemonic objectives of their governments.
- This is the age of technology, every people are becoming media person, and therefore they can put forth their views and incidence what was happened?, why was it happened? How was it happened? Therefore Western Medias need to inner cleansing themselves to promote equitable discourse globally.
- Third-world nations encourage a more sophisticated comprehension of media dynamics and their consequences. In order to advance democratic principles and promote fair global discourse, policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society may collaborate to lessen the damaging impacts of Western media imperialism and propaganda on developing countries.

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