

PHILOSOPHY OF MEDIA MANIPULATION IN THE GLOBALIZATION ERA: OPTIONS FOR COUNTERING

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***Abstract.** Corporative global media cannot be an instrument of the culture of peace, because they have made widespread individualistic values of the consummative society. Through their symbolic power, they successfully dominate over every sphere of existence of a society: politics, economic life, social ties, national culture, human communication and private life. Traditional media could not be a factor in the promotion and development of culture of peace, simply because they are proponents of corporative economic and political interests. It is in the interest of citizens to counter the activities of “rapacious capitalism” (SCHMIDT 1998), of local comprador political and economic elites, and the practice of robbery of their work; to bridle the proliferation of weapons and acts of aggression.*

***Key words:** media manipulation, globalization, culture of peace, symbolic power, countering globalization*

“Power is now exercised through machines that directly organize the brains (in communication systems, information networks, etc.) and bodies (the welfare systems, monitored activities, etc.) toward a state of autonomous alienation from the sense of life and the desire of creativity”.

M. Hardt, A. Negri “Empire”

As I see it, the role of mass media information in the process of globalization in the world today is somehow paradoxical. New information and communication technologies have made it possible to attain a new dynamic type of political, social and cultural integration of mankind as a “global village” (MCLUHAN 1962); in

which space and time lose their importance in the sphere of communication. At the same time, the so called neoliberal globalization, based on the existence of world financial markets and the power of transnational corporations, leads to the appearance of a worldwide hegemony of commercial corporative media. They become “instituted” as economic structures, striving for occupation of markets by all possible means. They have evolved an “ideological justification” of the global expansion of capitalism in the sphere of values, human relations and lifestyle. One could rightfully say that the latter has an impact on “the Global Empire” as a “paradigmatic form of biopower”; thus – it “creates the very world it inhabits” and “seeks directly to rule over human nature” (HARDT, Negri, 2001, p.xv).

The latest crisis with the terrorist attack against the yellow French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, which has published provocative caricatures against Islam and the escalation of the present existing refugee crisis, and the terrorist attacks in Paris from 13.11.2015 are another confirmation of the present existing and deepening process of internal war and the fundamental division of the West. Crises like these two ones became forms of collective manipulation of fear and hatred of foreigners. Global corporate media are the main tool to instill a fear of others and false interpretation of the tragic events. It is a consequence of the brutal capitalist expansion and destruction of statehood in the regions of North Africa and Middle East, which reached a new peak after the Cold War era. These crises are expression of some deep problems with one’s own identity of these brutal and expansionist communities in the rich West!

Corporative global media cannot be an instrument of the culture of peace, because they have made widespread individualistic values of the consummative society. Through their symbolic power, they successfully dominate over every sphere of existence of a society: politics, economic life, social ties, national culture, human communication and private life. Their products are symbols and ideas put

out by cultural and media industries, false values and “cloned” images. They create a new reality in which people live a fictitious life. The thesis that the Internet and world networks are the only natural spheres in which people can become united for resistance against this global domination will be grounded on following pages. A global civil society could only emerge by means of free communication countering activities of proponents of social globalization; it is against abuse with power by political and economic elites, and against global injustice. “The culture of peace” roots in values of tolerance, solidarity, mutual respect and cooperation of people across the world – against common threats. Ordinary people, not elites – should benefit from advantages of the process of globalization. The latter is a source of crises, striving for attainment of unlimited power. Crises augment the wealth of certain people and widen the gap of global poverty.

The worldwide hegemony of corporative media has not been the result of an overt aggression, one of the types of a conquest. It is “not mechanical, not simply coercive, nor deceitfully manipulative” – it becomes enforced “through persuasive political and cultural practices, which necessarily require normalized interpretations best communicated to the masses via the media”. Hence, “capitalist hegemony needs parallel media hegemony as an institutionalized, systematic means of educating, persuading, and representing subordinate classes to particular cultural practices within the context of capitalist norms. If culture is the ideological cement of society, – says media expert Lee Artz – then, to secure corporate interests, capitalist globalization needs media hegemony to recruit, tame, and popularize interpretations, information, and cultural behavior complementary to deregulation, privatization, and commercialization (ARTZ 2003, pp.16-17)”. Values of individualism, free enterprise and consumptive society are being propagated by means of movies, news comments, insipid messages of electronic media, games, commercial reality shows and other “world formats” of manipulated entertainment.

Global media have a small number of corporate owners who manage the global neoliberal consensus. Its approval is provided through series of false symbolic images.

Globalization is a process ignoring national borders, state control and the characteristics of “minor cultures”. It is “driven by companies, not by countries”. “Corporations, argue the globalists, have replaced states and theocracies as the central producers and distributors of cultural globalization” (HELD, McGrew 2005, p.18). There exists some talk about cultural and media imperialism in discussions on the effects of these processes. Thus, imperialism spells out enforcement of values and cultural achievements of one country on other countries. Globalization is the main threat to local cultures and identities. Media imperialism has no “national face”; it is an expression of the domination of “The Empire” over the human kind. Referring to phenomenology, one can say that the system outlined above dominates “the life world” through the work of media. Corporative media have no national or cultural identity of their own; through their activity they maximize the profits of transnational corporations and their local branches. The growing concentration of media ownership is a permanent trend in their development: it has a direct effect on the nature of their “output”. In particular, this holds good for the “output” of older media “vehicles”: television, radio and newspapers.

The truth about the existence of media domination in life is not ungrounded, altogether! The thesis that it imposes values of American culture on the rest of the world as a form of cultural imperialism is rightfully considered as “too pessimistic” and “conspiratorial” (WILLIAMS 2003, pp.219-220). Nobody could produce something or sell something in a “global manner”. The concept of “Macdonaldization” of the world presupposes a convergence of global culture by means of “unification of life styles, cultural symbols and transnational forms of

behavior". The realization of "global products" is conformed to the nature of local values and interests; else, they would not be acceptable. For this reason, Mickey Mouse is known as Topolino in Italy (BECK 2002, pp.76-77). K. Williams is right in saying that "the blurring of boundaries between media genres, the adaptation of global media to local conditions, the use of new media to resist Western values and re-assert local cultures... support the notion of globalization as a positive and inclusive phenomenon" (WILLIAMS 2003, p.225). As an additional argument one could point to different forms of resistance of local cultures against their absorption by the global one; this process has led to a hybridization and pluralism of the global cultures.

The outline above pertains to cultural symbols – it does not touch upon political messages and social interpretations. If pluralism still has chances in the cultural sphere, political messages and social interpretations unanimously stand for the so-called "Washington consensus" and neoliberal strategies. This type of political and social projects is considered as having no alternative (HARRISON 2002, pp.16-17). It is in chime with the "intimate ideas" of corporative media owners. Neoliberal values claim to be "the universal therapy" for all economic and social evils. Now, one could say that the neoliberal economists of our day are counterparts of theologians of the Middle Ages (POGGE 2005, p.30). They are "theologians" of the "Global Empire".

Our interest in the global hegemony of corporative media relates to the possibility to use them as an instrument of promoting the culture of peace. It is opposed to their nature and basic orientation. It is true that the values of solidarity, mutual aid, tolerance and cooperation do not lead to the development of easily marketed products. They cannot be coached to the neoliberal vision of the world. The latter is only limited to the notion of "state of nature": strong and economically active people alone could survive in such conditions. As a whole, mass media

champion easily digestible individualistic values. It is their mission to downgrade genuine social values by means of starting out from the principle of dissociation (Perelman): war is presented as peace, aggression – as humanitarian assistance and robbery - as dignity. Corporative media propaganda has a telling effect on social attitudes; it is an incontestable fact that social commitments have disappeared in our society, as evinced also by results of the latest European Survey of Values valid for Bulgarians (BOUZOV 2009).

In the light of the above said, an interpretation of political and war conflicts can prove to be one-sided. The number of such conflicts increased after the end of the Cold War. They have now turned into one of the foremost problems of the development of an effective system of global security. Media presentations of such conflicts usually single out the “rightfulness” of the stand of the “Great Forces” – i.e. of Global West, identifying itself with the international community as a whole and with the universal values of democracy, saying that it always has a natural intuition to identify and defend “victims” in a conflict. In the light of the much-vaunted triumph of democratic values all over the world (FUKUYAMA 1992), it is not clear why such conflicts are not minimized! On the contrary, they have marked a growth in number and severity. Invariably, “the other side” is a source of all possible violations of freedom and terrible “global crimes”, such as nationalism, chauvinism, terrorism, ethnic cleansing and corruption. Peace must be imposed by means of the use of force. This “black and white scheme” has been kept viable in respect of the Balkan conflicts, ever since the nineties of the 20th century and up to the present day. Media have cropped up in the Balkan countries with activities overtly orientated to the erosion of national boundaries and values, in the wake of propaganda work favoring neoliberal universalism as a substitute.

The view that the Balkans, as a region of Europe, are a dangerous “powder-keg”, with widespread nationalism, corruption and eroded institutions, is an

omnipresent twitter in Western mass media. They are feverishly trying to dig out historical arguments for their negative interpretations (MCCAIN 1999). In one of my previous papers, I offer some grounded arguments against this ideological concoction (BOUZOV 2001). The Balkan Region has never been more insecure as a result of intervention of the Great Powers in its affairs. Rather, such interventions have accounted for the drawing of new dividing lines of contradictions; as well as for the creation of more favorable conditions for the spread of international terrorism, organized crime and corruption. They are coupled with loss of human life and material wealth, and a decades-long setback of economic progress. NATO's and EU's doors still remain locked for countries in the Western Balkans! One could rightfully say that the West has lost its "moral priority" after the war against former Yugoslavia. The effectiveness of its peaceful "deeds" in Yugoslavia is highly questionable.

Traditional media could not be a factor in the promotion and development of culture of peace, simply because they are proponents of corporative economic and political interests and are an instrument of realization of the Empire's global hegemony. However, there exist certain sources of real resistance to its global hegemony – the global civil society itself, as an association of free citizens and their organizations created by means of communication in networks and common action against neoliberal domination and abuse of power. The Internet offers the possibility for frank and free communication among people. The global communication network is an environment of "communicative action" (as J. Habermas puts it), leading people to consensus in their assessment of socially-important values.

These forms of collaboration can boost up the acceptance of the culture of peace by all common sense individuals – by means of championing tolerance, mutual aid and respect for differences. People in the Balkan societies have to

accept these values as a tool in the settlement of conflicts and in guaranteeing a more secure and promising future.

It is an incontestable fact, though, that the Balkan countries are somehow aside of the resistance against the ongoing neoliberal globalization, worldwide. The information about activities and initiatives of the world civil society from 1999 to the present day (remember activities in Seattle, Genua, Prague) reaching them is limited and one-sided. It is controlled by corporative mass media and global elites. Pluralism is defined as a danger by them. Greece is an exception to the rule.

Ten years have passed since the holding of the first conference of the World Social Forum. It came into being for the purpose of becoming an opponent to the neoliberal World Economic Forum in Davos and the domination of economic and political elites. A great number of national organizations are members of the WSF. Alliances – such as *Attack*, *Amnesty International*, green movements, the supporters of politics without war, are indebted to communication in the global network information for their effective action. Within its framework it is possible to organize quickly campaigns of protest and to demand of political institutions to secure transparency and reaction to abuse of power by global political and economic elites. The hope for materializing “a different globalization” makes it necessary to grasp the need for existence of a global (cosmopolitan) responsibility of all citizens as regards democratization in all its aspects: regional, national and worldwide management (LEGGEWIE 2007). No doubt, the culture of peace should be accepted and forwarded on a worldwide scale as a must.

The principles of the culture of peace and consensus could be based on the level of communication in the world information network of nongovernmental and civil organizations. It is in the interest of citizens to counter the activities of “rapacious capitalism” (SCHMIDT 1998), of local comprador political and economic elites, and the practice of robbery of their work; to bridle the

proliferation of weapons and acts of aggression. Formulation and acceptance of social values is the road leading to the finding of a way out of permanent crises and regional conflicts, to boosting up economic and social development.

Being social researchers in our society, we are in bound to map out prospects for change in the present-day unfavorable set-up in the world and in our own ill-fated part of Europe – the Balkans.

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