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**TOPIC: GLOBAL MEDIA: A NEW FORM OF HEGEMONY?**

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Abstract

This paper attempt to examine and understand the nature of the global media system and to establish the hegemonic tendencies inherent in and accompanying the assumed superficiality of capitalism. The five big media corporations and their holdings and subsidiaries are presented. The theory of cultural hegemony formulated by the Italian, Antonio Gramsci is used as an explanatory framework. Finally, implication for the Nigerian state is discussed after the nexus between global media and global hegemony has been critically analysed.

**Introduction**

The tendency of one social group or class to dominate another is a feature constant in nearly all human societies. Even in social formations that have socialist and communist leanings, there is still a semblance of group domination, group conflict and clashes of interest. Hence, there is entirely no classless society (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987), (Ninalowo, 2010). In this vein, the argument can be stretched for the analysis of interaction between countries. The western nations of Europe and North America exert dominance on developing and third world countries of Africa, Caribbean, Pacific and Latin America.

By this token, the former are variously referred to, in this international power structure as the “core, the centre and the metropoles”, while the later are christened the “satellites, the periphery and the third worlds”. Hence, the terms ‘global north and global south’ had been created in the international development circles to refer to the affluent countries of Western Europe and North America and Africa and Latin America respectively. (Olasunkanmi, 2018) This is the thrust of the argument of Globalisation theory and its many variants, as well as the central focus of (Wallerstain’s, 1980) modern world system theory (Ritzer, 2008).

The Europeans came to the shore of Africa, uninvited and under the guise of missionary and commerce (Ajayi and Crowder, 1985). Through triangular slave trade, they forcefully took away the virile and agile population of Africa to work on plantations in their country, thereby denying Africa of the working population that would have set the tone for its development. After slavery came colonialism. During the colonialist regime, the economies of the African societies were structured to be dependent on that of Europe. (Ake, 1995) Raw materials were taken off cheaply and spirited to Europe where it is processed and turned to consumer products, far above the reach of the Africans. With the demise of colonialism, came neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism, culminating in a global hegemony where they structure the developmental agenda of their former colonists in ways detrimental to the later’s interest.

After colonialism, the peripheral states still had to be dependent on the core nations. (Ake, 1995). The world became a capitalist world economy (Ritzer, 2008), an international division of labour (Wallerstain, 1978) where the satellite states “produce the raw materials to the core and are heavily exploited by it.”The modern world system” as contrasted from “World Empire” does not depend on force or coercion or military invasion but on economic and ideological domination (Wallerstain, cited in Ritzer 2008).

The nature of this modern world system permits other forms of hegemonic influences. It became easier for the culture of the core nations to penetrate into that of the periphery. Citizens of the “backward nations” embrace foreign values and norms. This is manifested in their mode of dressing, communication and other patterns of social interaction.

The penetration of foreign cultural values would not have been a success story but for the germane role of the globalisation and hence global media system. The media often referred to as the fourth estate of the realm or the unofficial fourth arm of government has the onerous responsibility to report on the activities of the other three arms of government to the public. It is expected in line with its historical raison d’être to align with the underdog. That is, the ordinary common folks. It is expected to monitor the activities of the state either manifesting in the form of either class state or at the level of political state.

However, can contemporary media be said to be in tune with the traditional expectations of the people whether nationally or internationally? Therefore the preoccupation of this paper will be to provide explanation and answer to this and other tangential issues against the background of combination of factors like the purchasing power of the people, the place of local language within the pentarchy of international languages, and government regulations and censorship.

Therefore, the essence of this paper is to examine whether the global media is a new form of global hegemony within the world capitalist system. That is, to determine whether the global media is actually performing its natural role of information, education and entertainment or is merely harnessing the opportunities presented by globalisation and if there is a tendency of hegemonic penetration congealed within capitalistic accumulation that is unified and coordinated at the level of logic.

**Conceptual clarification**

Before ensuing further, there is the need for proper definition and conceptualisation of some key concepts for the sake of clarity.

**Global media:** These are media corporations with world view. It refers in entirety to the media industry unrestricted by geography that employs the instrumentality of television, radios, satellite televisions, magazines, newspapers, journals, books, films, cinemas, theatre, music etc to disseminate information for the purpose of informing, educating and entertaining people.

**Global hegemony:** The concept of hegemony is associated with the works of the Italian, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1973). He used the term to denote the predominance of one group over another, not only through political-economic control but also through the ability of the dominant group to project itself positively to the subordinate group and drew their willingness and active consent in seeing things their way and accepting their dominance as natural. The emphasis of hegemony is on the willing consent of the subordinates rather than on legitimacy through coercion.

Historically, the term “hegemony” has its origin in Greek literature. It is derived from the word “hegemon” which means leader. At that time, hegemony is used to refer to political domination of some ancient Greek city state over their conquered neighbours. However, in contemporary times, the emphasis had shifted from brute force to consent and willingness. Hence, it is essentially ideological.

**THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF GLOBAL MEDIA**

The nature of the global media system is essentially capitalistic. (Coyote, 1998). We can situate its origin in the liberal capitalist democracy of United States. In his book “Media, Capitalist and Politics (1998)” coyote presents an empirical analysis of capitalist tendencies of America media corporations. He said that of the five thousand five hundred (5,500) media outlets in United States, 90% of them were owned by 23 Corporations” .The fall-out of this is that there is high degree of merger and acquisition in the industry which is consistent with the logic of abrasive acquisition peculiar to capitalism. Coyote would also hinted on the hegemonic tendencies of global media through what he called “homogenous view point” of U.S media. He believes with the mergers and acquisitions, the media corporations tends to become smaller coalescing into a huge behemoth, leading to a unified perspective in presenting information.

It is interesting to note that the global media system that dominates the entire world in terms of determining what people watches, that they hears, and what they get to know is made up of five corporations and they are:

* + - Time Warner -Ted Turner
    - Disney -Walt Disney
    - Bertelsmann
    - Viacom
    - News corporation -Rupert Murdoch

Robert (McChesney, 1997) in “global media giants” flaunts his Marxist orientation when he writes.

“A spectre now haunts the world: a global commercial media system dominated by a small number of super powerful, mostly US based transnational media corporations”

(McChesney, 1997).

In the same book, he categorised the global media system into two tiers. The first tier is made up of nine giant firms, with the five biggest mentioned above. The second tier is made up of about thirty to forty media firms. It is instructive to note that the big five mentioned above control more than sixty percent (60%) of the market. They are the real multinational behemoth and they will be used in our analysis and understanding of global media system.

**The Global Media: The Big 5**

1. **Time Warner:** the largest media corporation in the world. It came into existence in 1989 through the merger of Time International and Warner Communications. Its acquisition of Turner broadcasting in 1996 made it the biggest and the largest media company in the world.

It has major interest in news, films, cable, music, television, publishing, radio books, magazines, etc

Some of his well known subsidiaries and selected holdings are CNN, Warner Bros, US cable, Time Magazine, People, TNT, Superman and Batman publications e.t.c.

Time Warner, through its many subsidiaries has more than 90 million customers in more than 200 countries, more than 25,000 television programmes, more than 2 thousand movie screens outside US, 24 magazines, 16 television stations and many more.

1. **Disney:** often associated with the billionaire, Walt Disney. It is the second largest media firm in the world. It was a company that initially focussed on theme parks and animation. It became a fully media conglomerate in1995 when it purchased ABC.

Now, Disney owns ESPN which is broadcast in 21 languages to over 165 countries. It has 3 cables channels, 420 radio stations, book publishing firms and music production.

1. **Bertelsmann:** this is the only European country among the big five .It controls significant part of market in Europe**.**
2. **Viacom**: an American company. It owns popular subsidiaries like Macmillan, Paramount pictures, MTV.
3. **News Corporation:** news Corporation deserves special attention because of the personality of its capitalist founder, Murdoch. Rupert Murdoch found News Corporation in his native country Australia in the 50’s from where it entered Britain and American. Some of its selected holdings include Broadcasting Network, Twenty Century Fox, 132 newspapers including the London Times and New York Post, 25 magazines etc. It maintains physical presence in 6 difference continents.

It needs to be emphasised that analysts and industry watchers have observed that there is a strong likelihood of more mergers and acquisition in the foreseeable future. What this mean is that in not too distant a future, there might be just one or two media corporation controlling the world global media market. This is possible against the backdrop of the nature of capitalist. The capitalist is a greedy animal that desire to conquer the world. He is hardly satisfied with the lot he has but always strives for more.

**MEDIA HEGEMONY.**

The appellation “media hegemony” has come to be use to describe the expansion of corporate media practice on a global scale (Artz and Kamalipour, 2003). However, it needs to be established if in the process of expansionism, there is an undertone of hegemonic tendencies congealed without any consideration for the local norms and values.

This can be properly driven home when situated within the fears raised by developing countries. The third world countries at a time bandied together, using the platform and instrumentality of UNESCO to fashion out plans for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and fight the cultural imperialism of the western powers.

Contemporary Marxist ideologues like (McChesney, 1997) have argued that the global media is not a form of global hegemony. He held that what is propelling the media giants in their expansionist drive is merely a manifestation of capitalistic tendencies inherent in them. That is the desire for profit and not any congealed sinister agenda of entrenching foreign cultural values on local folks.

In “The problem of the media: US communication politics in the 21st century”, Robert McChesney argues that with “the changing global media political economy, the belief that corporate media firms are purveyors of US culture is not plausible”. He believes that as global media system becomes more increasingly concentrated, commercialised and globalised, it projects corporate outlook, with shareholders, employees, offices and operations scattered all over the world. Hence, it values and advances corporate and commercial interest and neglect those that cannot be incorporated into its mission. He further argues that there is no significant difference in a firm’s content whether in Japan, Estonia or Nigeria. He concluded that capitalism, rather that hegemonic penetration is the driving force and motivation for the expansionist agenda of global media system.

While this may be true to some extent, we cannot fail to see the hegemonic tendency inherent even in capitalism itself. That is, McChesney failed to take into consideration the hegemonic root of capitalism itself. The Italian, Antonio Gramsci argued that the media have always play a key role in teaching people to do things in their everyday lives that support the power structures such as government, capitalism and corporation. Gramsci also says that “media appeal to the moral sentiments of the people, intruding on their rational sense to see things the media way which is also the way of the capitalist”

Thus, we can safely conclude that the global media system, not only operates in conformity with capitalist oriented logic but also as a new form of imperialism and global hegemony which is consequent upon capitalistic orientation. This becomes more heightened by the structure of the present world order, the homogenous viewpoint projected by the global media and cloning and designation of particular vested interest as possessing global relevance such as terrorism, arm proliferation, nuclear armament etc.

**THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

We can attempt to buttress our understanding of global media hegemony by situating it within the framework of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony.

THEORY OF CULTURAL HEGEMONY:-

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian propounded this theory within the structure of Marxist analysis of inequality. His contention is that cultural hegemony is essentially rooted in philosophic and sociological ideology that tries to explain how a culturally diverse society can be ruled and dominated by one social group. The thrust of Gramsci’s argument is that “hegemony denotes an ongoing process of ideological control whereby dominant codes of behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and values are reproduced in any social formation” (Ninalowo, 2004), and that social institutions like school, work, law and media are vehicle through which the values of the dominant class are sustained and perpetrated.

Drawing considerably from historical materialistic interpretation and dialectical analysis that characterised Marxist theory, Gramsci was trying to unravel the causation of the failed eschatological basis inherent in Marxist theory. That is, why the revolution of the working class as predicted by Karl Marx was merely a deceptive mirage. (Pareto 1991). It was the search for explanation for this that led to the theory of hegemony. Antonio Gramsci’s peculiar circumstances were also instrumental to the theory cultural hegemony. He lived in a difficult time, which was during Mussolini’s Italy and he spent many years in the fascist’s jail.

It was actually in prison that he formulated the theory to explain why capitalism was overthrown by a more oppressive fascist regime in Italy.

It is the basic proposition of this theory that can be stretched to understand the concept of hegemony within the ambit of relationship between societies. Through the global media system, values, norm, beliefs and thought processes of the developing nations are patterned and conditioned to fit into that of the western liberal democracies. Thus, it is not coincidental to see citizens of the peripheral nations having a blind ambition to emigrate to these countries, believe products emanating from there are of greater quality than their own, adopt their way of life and tries to abstractically replicate institutions there in their own subconscious.

CRITIQUE:-

Though the cultural theory of hegemony provides insight into why the golden age of the millenarian is never achieved in capitalist societies, yet, it lack explanation for successful proletariat revolution in former Soviet Union and the adoption of socialism in the former Eastern European Bloc as well as Communist China. That these societies are no more socialist cannot be said to be a factor of hegemony as a singular causation but rather through the multiplicity of variants of conflicts like small wars, proxy wars and cold war.

**Media Hegemony: Conclusive Thoughts and Implications for Nigeria**

Nigeria is not an island. It is part of the global village not immune to the effect of global media penetration and hegemony. Through the instrumentality of the global media system reinforced by capitalism, issues like football betting had been introduced into the local development agenda. Nigeria was never a gambling nation but presently most of its youth has become compulsive gamblers due mainly to lack of employment

Through the instrumentality of global media, the foreign football league has been brought into the consciousness of Nigeria through DSTV, a Satellite television owned by ESPN which is a subsidiary of DISNEY.

Also observable within the Nigerian context is a curious marriage between capitalism, hegemony and media which have the implication of attracting the greedy and capitalistic interest of global hawks like Turner, Murdoch and probably Walter Disney. States governors, former and serving senators and other Political office holders are all investing massively in the media, ostensibly to make profit and to also use it as a platform to perpetrate the values and norms of the their class. Television Continental and Radio Continental (owned by former governor Bola Tinubu of Lagos State), Adaba FM (also owned by Tinubu), Renaissance FM (owned by former Gov. Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State) Compass Newspaper (owned by former Governor Gbenga Daniel of Ogun State), The Sun (owned by former Governor Orji Uzor Kalu of Adia State), MBI (owned by senator Mike Ajegbo) and many others. All these represent a crude and lopsided ownership of information by powerful interest with a monopoly of control on what people must see, hear and believe.

The hegemonic undertone of media is even more visible in Nigeria when special focus is given to government owned media organisations. These media firms have been used by government of the day to maintain the status quo, and ensure total compliance. For example when the 2007 election was adjudged to be massively rigged, thus puncturing deep hole in the legitimacy of political office holders, the mechanism of the media was used to “pacify the people” that though the election was flawed the country has to move on and all vacuum must be filled as nature abhors vacuum and that the civil societies should be more watchful at the next election and that life must generally go on.

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