

Role of Mass Media in Setting Agenda and Manufacturing Consent: A Study on Wars to Rise of Radical Group (Hefajat-e-Islam) in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The current liberalized environment is characterized by information and knowledge. Media is very powerful that plays a significant role in shaping public opinions and beliefs. Manufacturing consent by mass media for its own sake by using selective or propaganda news is a dormant question in present world especially in Bangladesh where massive media boom occurred after post millennium period. Political influence and pressure from the Government, self censorship by journalists due to stress from upper hierarchy are just some of the factors that affects viewer's perception. Media is now playing a role for a change agent or a mediator of setting agenda. In this paper, the present problems underlying these facts in Bangladesh and the rest of the world are analyzed and compared with the similar case studies as it is essential to know how media shape the public opinion and setting agenda and manufacture consent.

Keywords: Public opinion; Manufacturing consent; Agenda setting; Propaganda; Manipulation; Bangladesh nationalist party(BNP); Awami league; Hefajat-e Islam Banglash; Jamaat-e-Islami; Shahbagh movement; Motijheel operation; Atheist-Theist

Introduction

At present we are living in a mass mediated society. We see the power of media has expanded in a vast way. Mass media is regarded as a tool for giving information, entertainment and education. It is super powerful tool in shaping public opinion. It is now playing role for a change agent or a mediator of setting agenda. Beginning of mass media, research showed that it had direct impact on the audiences. Magic Bullet Theory showed that content of the media worked like a bullet for audience head. Media inject its message straightly. Now-a-days media create confusion among the viewers. Media bring out an agenda. They make an effort to set an agenda among the audience for their own sake. Mass media have an impact on society that is an alternative to attitude change and the impact could be significant. There is evidence that media are shaping the peoples' view [1]. It is assumed that radio, TV and newspapers play a deliberate role when issues are emerged. In Vietnam War, we see that mass media have played a role in protesting the war. In the war time period, the unusual role of the mass media can be revealed out. How they shape public opinion against the war becomes clearer.

This article tried to explain the agenda setting role of mass media during any crisis moment. Hence, there will be exemplars from many wars and especially the protest of 'Hefajat-e-Islam' a radical group in Bangladesh'. As we look back to the 'Motijheel Protest' of 'Hefajot-e-Islam in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the pro- Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) mass media tried to shape the public perception on the numbers of people killed. However Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) leaders claimed that the propaganda supporting 'Hefajat-e-Islam' was the main reason of the failure of BAL in five city corporation elections recently held. These opinions of the media played a very important role on shaping public opinion. Thus the present study focused as to how media shaped the public opinion, setting agenda and manufacture consent.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are given below:

- Did mass media set agenda and manufacture consents?
- What was the role of mass media during war time?
- How did Bangladeshi mass media shaped public opinion?
- What was the impact of pro 'BNP' mass media in Bangladesh?
- What was the role of pro 'BNP' mass media during 'Shahbagh Movement'?
- How did the the mass media strengthen the protest of 'Hefajat-e-Islam'?
- How did they establish the false number of killings during 'Motijheel' operation by law enforcers agencies?

Theoretical lenses

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge, within the limits of the critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research problem

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under study exists. Researchers considered the Propaganda Theory of Communication and Agenda Setting Theory as a theoretical consideration. The totalitarian propagandist conceptualized as a very practical means of mass manipulation an effective mechanism for controlling large populations so that the dominant majority came to have and act upon certain beliefs and attitudes. Propagandists typically held elitist and paternalistic views about their audiences. They believed that people needed to be changed for their own good.

In Bangladesh, we saw that pro 'BNP'(Bangladesh Nationalist Party) mass media supported the demand of Hefajat-e-Islam since many members of 'Jamaat e Islam' were involved with Hefajat-e-Islam while 'BNP' and 'Jamaat' are the alliance of 18 political parties, where they claimed that more than thousands of 'Hefajat' supporters were killed during the law enforcers operation on the night of 5th May, 2013. This may be attributed to Propaganda Theory.

On the other hand, Mass Media tried to set agenda among the audience. Maxwell [2] indicated that 'agenda-setting is the process whereby the news media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues. The modern concept of agenda setting is often attributed to Walter Lipmann who in his book Public Opinion, argued that the mass media created images of events in our minds and that policy makers should be cognizant of those 'pictures in people's heads.'

It is observed that mass media in the United States of America played a significant role in building public opinion in supporting and or opposing the liberation war that took place in Bangladesh in 1971. This article deals with the role of mass media during war time, when they set agenda. In Bangladesh, pro 'BNP' and 'Jamaat-e-Islami' mass media opposed the 'Shahbagh Movement', who supported the trial of the war crimes of 1971. They said, this movement is headed by the atheist bloggers and online activists. For example 'The Daily Amar Desh', a local paper played a mouth piece role of 'BNP' and 'Jamaat-e-Islami'. Main reason of pro 'BNP' and 'Jamaat-e-Islami' mass media were opposing 'Shahbagh Movement' because 'Jamaat' was against war crime tribunal. Most of the senior 'Jamaat' leaders allegedly committed war crimes in 1971. 'BNP' and 'Jamaat' are the alliance of 18th party.

In 'Shahbagh Movement' the Government somehow tried to involve themselves to gain popularity from mass people. It was another reason of BNP to move away from the movement. Pro 'BNP' and 'Jamaat-e-Islami' mass media tried to establish that the 'Shahbagh Movement' was done atheist group. Those media published and on aired that the protesters took money from Government to divert the interrim government issue. So, the Agenda Setting Theory could be attributed.

In this article researchers tried to find out the role of mass media in manipulating consent manufacture in many agenda. At the same time there was an effort to find out as to how mass people perceived the messages of mass media on particular issues.

Researchers found that there are insufficient studies regarding to agenda setting functions of mass media in Bangladesh.

But, there was numerous studies on Agenda Setting and propaganda functions of media of western countries during the war period. Diamaggio [3] said, political and media elites continue to play a vital role in limiting democratic government. By conceding that the public is able to reject many of the media's egemonic messages [3].

However, Muin [4] brought that media attention and framing of the issues of the Iraq War, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the attacks of September 11, 2001 suggests a correlation between media agenda-setting and public agenda-building. He also said thorough

media analysis about whether information and opinions are accurate and trustworthy, public opinion can easily be manipulated by political operatives or other special interests working toward a shared goal of message manipulation [4].

Few researchers found the Gulf War as one of the best examples of manipulating the consent of the people. Desert Storm clearly demonstrated to what extent the media and the military would converge during times of conflict. The operation illustrated the need for clear guidance on how to best incorporate media into a military operation. In the war the Bush administration and the Pentagon did a job in utilizing the media to accomplish national goals in the Gulf War [5].

Here researchers found there is crisis of the studies on Agenda Setting role of the Bangladeshi mass media. However, researchers took the help from various newspapers, blogs, World Wide Web, comments of the leaders to establish the study.

Research Question

The research question in this article is to find out and describe the role of mass media in setting agenda among the audience and how mass media manufacturing consent for its own goal.

Methodology

This study is mainly based on the Historical Approach of research methodology. Historical research is the process of perception and understanding the background and growth of a chosen field of study or profession can offer insight into organizational culture, current trends, and future possibilities. The historical method of research applies to all fields of study because it encompasses their origins, growth, theories, personalities, crisis, etc. Both quantitative and qualitative variables can be used in the collection of historical information.

A case study is a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits the operation of some identified general theoretical principles. The case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, relies on multiple sources of evidence [6]. However, the researchers linked the case study with the historical research to analyze the role of mass media and its impact on the audience. So, there will be discussion on the role of mass media. Case studies will discuss how media influenced audience on particular issues.

What is public opinion?

Before we discuss how media shape the public perception and present data collection and sampling process, it is necessary to know what public opinion is. It is really a difficult term to define. Because, it belongs to society, economy, mass media and state etc. Sometimes, it is the collection of persons' belief or attitudes.

Public opinion can be defined as the cumulative collection of opinions of different people about a social or political topic. Public opinion is primarily a communication from the citizens to their government and only secondarily a communication among the citizens [7]. Subsequent advances in statistical and demographic analysis led by the 1990s to an understanding of public opinion as the collective view of a defined population, such as a particular demographic or ethnic group. The influence of public opinion is not restricted to politics and elections. It is a powerful force in many other spheres, such as culture,

fashion, literature and the arts, consumer spending, and marketing and public relations.

Data collection and sampling

This study is based on historical and current events of abroad as well as in Bangladesh. Therefore, the study used secondary sources for example books, journals, and newspapers for historical analysis. Researchers took the help from internet or World Wide Web for the collection of data. Overall, the indepth analysis of the case studies were also made to find out the agenda setting and propaganda function of mass media. There will be synopsis of the event and researchers tried to discuss the role of media in particular that situation. The analysis of data is presented in the below

Vietnam war: Vietnam War is also recognized as Second Indo China War. This war was began in 1955 and ended in 1975. This war was placed in during the era of Cold War. The war was extended in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The First Indochina War was fought between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. North Vietnam was backed by China and communist cronies and South Vietnam was backed by USA and defiant communist allies. The U.S. government viewed American involvement in the war as a way to prevent a communist takeover of South Vietnam. This was part of their wider strategy of containment which aimed to stop the spread of communism. The North Vietnamese government and the Viet Cong were fighting to reunify Vietnam under communist rule. They viewed the conflict as a colonial war, fought initially against France, then against America as France was backed by the U.S., and later against South Vietnam, which it regarded as a U.S. puppet state.

Role of media and public perception: Vietnam War is regarded as one of the most disliked war in the history of USA. The cost of this war was the death of 60 thousands Americans and 2 to 4 million Vietnamese deaths. However, journalism has been changed during the period of Vietnam War. At first, reporters sent news form the field. They made several trustworthy and objective investigative reports from the war field. The story of Vietnam and how pictures of bloody fights, American casualties, and killed Vietnamese civilians turned around American public opinion and, eventually, led to the withdrawal of American troops, has become a classic [8]. Reporters became cynical on the upshot of the war. As a result, media created confusion among the viewers on the war. People began to distrust the war and the government. Dean Rusk, U.S. Secretary of State, said on the coverage of media on Vietnam War:

"This was the first struggle fought on television in everybody's living room every day... whether ordinary people can sustain a war effort under that kind of daily hammering is a very large question."

We can remember the picture of nine year old girl, who was running naked after the attack of napalm in her village. It was one of the examples of what was shown by USA media. As a result, American public changed their mind. They opposed the war Figure 1.

As a result, war against the Vietnamese lost its credibility. It can be more justified with the comment of Marshall McLuhan in a TV interview:

"Television brought the brutality of war into the comfort of the living room. Vietnam was lost in the living rooms of America--not on the battlefields of Vietnam,"

Here we can assume that the role of mass media in Vietnam War nearly objective. It stood against the power class of the society. As a



Figure 1: Television brought the brutality of war into the comfort of the living room. Vietnam was lost in the living rooms of America--not on the battlefields of Vietnam.

result, TV viewers changed their mind. In the beginning they supported the government. But, gradually it was decreased. People started to oppose the government. However media played a different role in the Gulf War. The Persian Gulf War was a victory on many fronts. A historic battle was won on the battlefield, but a more substantial battle was won in the minds and hearts of the American people.

The gulf war (1990)

The Gulf War of 1991 is one of the historical events of the Middle East, as well as for the history of mankind. It was started in August 2nd, 1990 and continued to February 28th, 1991. US won the Gulf War. But this war brought many victories for USA. Pentagon and White House believe that negative news during the Vietnam War confused the Americans. USA applied the lesson that learned from the Vietnam War. Sympathetic media coverage of the Gulf War was successful to create public opinion for the war. Before the war domestic issues like budget deficit, economy, and drugs were the main public concern. Bush administration tried to get approval from the public regarding Iraq invasion. Bush administration made hype about Saddam Hussein. Before the invasion many Americans were not informed about Saddam Hussein. So, Public got confused about the need of the war or what was the real reason behind the war.

Media coverage of USA and the western world brought the public opinion in a shape towards the invasion. Western media portrayed Saddam Hussein as like Adolf Hitler. People thought it is indispensable to invade Iraq and stop another Hitler like evil Saddam Hussein. The abstract concept of evil has vastly transformed throughout human history. Media played significant role in this transformation. In modern times, evil has become an entirely ambiguous term. Who is evil? What is evil? Western Media portrayed men like Adolph Hitler and Saddam Hussein have been garnered with the term 'evil' for their atrocities against fellow humans. After that it has been an easy job for media to motivate people and manipulate consent that Saddam Hussein was the person who violates the individual rights of others on a massive scale, he is evil and evil should be destroyed.

When Iraq invaded and occupied the country of Kuwait in August 1990, the Bush administration was faced with several dilemmas. From a foreign policy point of view, this action could greatly destabilize the balance of power in a part of the world that was vital to U.S. interests. The United States was dependent on a continuous flow of oil to drive its economic machine, which Kuwait supplied greatly. In addition, this move would put more power into the hands of a government that was not only unfriendly to the U.S., but a sworn enemy of the state of Israel, a strong U.S. ally. In addition to, the fall of communism had created

what George Bush had described as, "A new world order," and would become the first major test of how the U.S. would handle its role as the sole remaining super power in this "new world order." There were many challenges facing the Bush administration as to the manner in which they would handle this first major international crisis. The Bush administration had to develop a consensus of the major remaining powers, and appear not acting alone in its response to President Saddam Hussein's actions of invading Kuwait. They also yearned to keep Israel from being involved so as not to alienate the remaining Middle Eastern nations. Lastly, they faced a domestic dilemma, in that much of the American public had significant reservations about involving U.S. troops involved in a foreign conflict. There remained a bad taste of Vietnam among the American public, and there were very mixed responses to American involvement in Somalia, Nicaragua, and Grenada. For the Bush administration, Hussein was not a merchant who could be bargained with, but rather an outlaw who would have to be defeated by force. The Bush administration was faced with a task of developing (more or less) overwhelming support from the U.S. people to take any action in Kuwait, which was accomplished by a dramatic public relations move to demonize Saddam Hussein. Briefings from the commanders of the war in every hour shaped the public opinion for the Bush administration. Live coverage of the CNN persuaded the public effectively. It is found that respondents, who mostly relied on television news, where military developments were emphasized, expressed greater support for a military rather than a diplomatic solution to the crisis [9].

September 11 attacks (2001) and invasion in Afghanistan

September 11 attacks one of the violent attacks after Pearl Harbor attack. Almost 3,000 people were killed on 11th September 2001, America's Day of Terror. Four airliners were hijacked by supporters of al-Qaeda. The first two planes crashed into the World Trade Center's twin towers in New York, the third into the Pentagon in Washington, and the fourth into a field in Pennsylvania. All those in the planes were killed instantly. Many more died on the ground, crushed by falling buildings.

Role of media and its impact on public perception

While 9/11 attacks is one of the deadliest attacks in the history of mankind. It brings a lot of problems for the Muslims in USA and other western countries. After the attacks many Americans defamed Islam as a religion of terrorism. It was encouraged by the mass media. US media tried to set agenda for anti Islam. And they did it successfully. However, the mass media of USA is blamed for promoting Islamophobia.

Media coverage of Muslim Americans in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 focused heavily on critiquing stereotypes and documenting violations of Muslims' civil liberties. Aware that fear can lead to prejudice, the shapers of American public opinion self-consciously and successfully sought to counteract that tendency. Opinion-makers relaxed this impulse after the immediate sense of threat subsided, especially in right-leaning media outlets. A gradual increase of animosity toward Islam during the period from 2002 to 2010 coincided with a growth of partisan difference in assessments of the faith. In examining the drivers of shifting attitudes over the course of the following decade, we observe an apparent interactive effect between the news cycles, partisan affiliation, and lack of first-hand knowledge of the faith.

Pew Forum survey conducted August 1-18, 2007, 32% of Americans identified the media as the greatest influence on their opinions of Muslims, compared to only 18% apiece for education and personal

experience, tied for second place. Study found that nearly 55% of the American have negative attitude toward Islam and American Muslims. The phobia quickened and mobilized the Iraq war of 2003 [10].

Iraq invasion (2003)

USA carried out Iraq invasion in 2003. The Iraq War was an armed conflict in Iraq that consisted of two phases. The first was an invasion of Iraq starting on 20 March 2003 by an invasion force led by the United States. It was followed by a longer phase of fighting, in which an insurgency emerged to oppose the occupying forces and the newly formed Iraqi government. After the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, the United Nations located and destroyed large quantities of Iraqi chemical weapons and related equipment and materials throughout the early 1990s, with varying degrees of Iraqi cooperation and obstruction.

We see that United Nations destroyed the Weapons of Mass Destructios (WMDs). But, George W. Bush and his administration created misdeception on Weapons of Mass Destructios. Before the Iraq invasion Mr. Bush said:

Right now, Iraq is expanding and improving facilities that were used for the production of biological weapons.

The top advisors of George W. Bush were not far away from him. They also tried to make the WMDs believable. US Vice President Dick Cheney said in a press briefing that

Awami League takes the control of Shahbagh, Minister Motiya delivers speech, Bangladesh Students' League manages the protest. (Translated) From examples of above, we can say that the president and his allies tried to give importance on threat of Iraq. They also tried to make it understandable that Saddam Hussien can create havoc. As a result they could create a confusion among the Ameircans. This confusion was enhanced by the mass media of USA by giving intentional pro war news. A study was carried out on representation of Iraqi War in the media of eight countries. It was found that USA media has a slight over representation of pro-war articles. USA Today supported the war blatantly [11]. Criticism of US coverage of the Iraq war has so far concentrated on the broadcasting sector, i.e. TV and radio. US networks stirred public emotions with special reports entitled "Countdown Iraq" on MSNBC or "Showdown with Saddam" on CBS. The BBC's Chief, Greg Dyke, attacked US broadcasters, saying that they not only revealed a clear pro-American bias during war coverage, but that many of them were outright patriotic and heated up public opinion during the war. Fox News, being the number one news channel in the US ahead of CNN, was generally considered strongly committed to the US government position. The largest radio group in the United States, US Cable News Networking, was criticized by Dyke for organizing pro-war rallies throughout the country [12]. If we take a look at the role of mass media before and during Iraq War, we will see that media tried to justify the war. They on aired speech of the George W. Bush and his administrations. The representation of war news portrayed the US attitude towards the Iraq. Firstly, US people were confused about the war whether it is justified or unjustified. When, the mass media took the part of US government, public perception was changed. After confusion they were believing that Iraq had the WMDs or Weapons of Mass Destructios. Mass media manufactured that belief. Various survey found that Americans supported the Iraq war in a great number. Survey organization Gallup carried out a survey among the 1000 Americans in 2003. 71% of the respondents supported the war against Iraq. They favored the war. We see that the continuous coverage on WMDs changed the mind of Americans. The same survey portrayed

that the 90% of the respondents thought the war has gone well. Though, USA could not find WMDs, however 9 of 10 Americans believed that USA will find the WMDs.

From the above point we can draw a diagram of the consent manufacturing process. First, the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction was created. Mass media generated the issue with the speech of US leaders and its reports. The tremendous news coverage of Western media confused the people. At last, people started supporting the Iraq invasion. We can describe the process in a diagram Figure 2:

Researchers have discussed the own model of manufacturing consent. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky stated the propaganda model of mass media at first. Their model shows how mass media of Western countries manufacture consent on behalf of the power class of the society. They said, a process works in every mass media. This process filters all the news according to their needs. After refining when the news goes to the audience, it become a tool for propaganda of power class. The model suggests five filters reconcile news in media [12]. They are

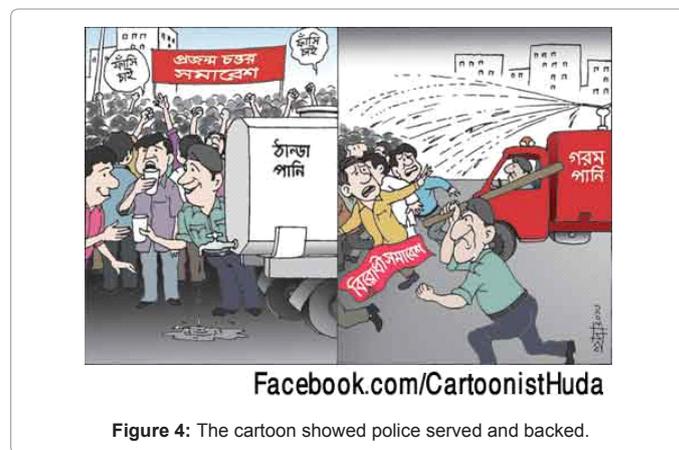
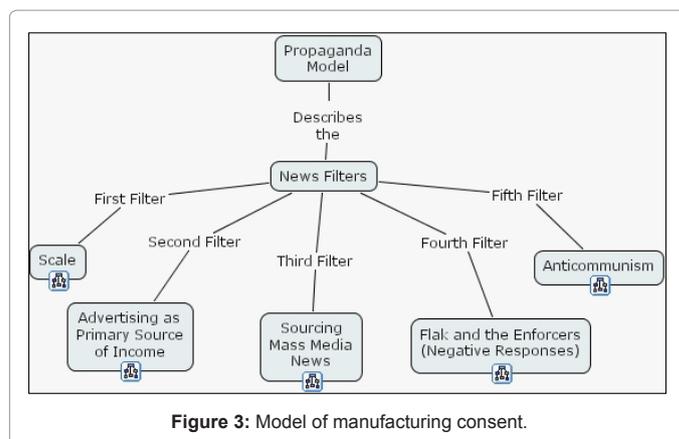
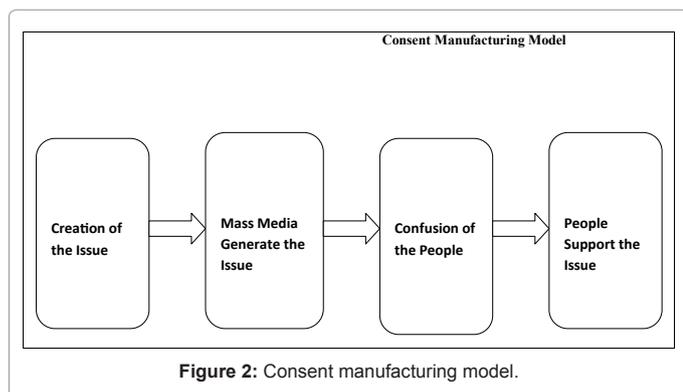
1. The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth,
2. Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media
3. The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power
4. "Flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
5. "Anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

The diagram of this model is given below:

Figure 3 Herman and Chomsky proposed this model for United States. However, they also said it can be applicable to other countries of the world. The model explains how people are manipulated and how consent is manufactured in the public mind for economic, social and political policies of power class.

Manufacturing consent through agenda setting: Perspective Bangladesh

Bangladesh is experiencing the turbulent times in recent days. 'Shabagh Movement' and the rise of 'Hefajat-e-Islam' brought a new dimension of political war among the government and 'BNP' led opposition parties. Pro 'BNP' and 'Jamaat' supported mass media played a role against the 'Shabagh Movement' and they also supported the claiming of 'Hefajat-e-Islam' on banning the movement. The researchers picked 'The Daily Amar Desh' newspaper which has raised



the issue of atheist-theist and for its overwhelming role for supporting the 'Hefajat-e-Islam'.

Shahbagh protest and the role of amar desh: 'Amar Desh' is a Bengali daily run by pro 'BNP' journalist Mahmudur Rahman. Mahmudur Rahman is the owner and the editor of 'Daily Amar Desh'. From the beginning of 'Shahbagh Movement', 'Amar Desh' played a negative role against the movement. At first the newspaper tried to symbolize the protest as a movement of Awami League. On 10th February the lead news of the newspaper was:

Awami League takes the control of Shahbagh, Minister Motiya delivers speech, Bangladesh Students' League manages the protest. (Translated)

With the same 'Amar Desh' 13th February published a cartoon on backing 'Shahbagh' by the 'Awami League' led government. The cartoon showed police served and backed the 'Shahbagh Protesters' whether it suppressed the opposition Figure 4. At the same time 'Amar Desh' tried to propagate that the movement is replicating Indian and Hindustic culture because they vigil candle lit which was backed by 'Bangladesh Student's League' the student wing of present government. 'Amar Desh' tried to divert the mind of the readers from the movement and create a new debate on atheist- theist issue.

Amar Desh and labeling atheism to the bloggers: However, the newspaper changed its leaning after the murder of blogger and activist Rajib on 15th February. The news paper published news on 18th February saying blogger Rajib is an atheist. He defamed the Allah and his prophet through his posts on different blogs. Rajib is one of the

main backers of these atheist blogger groups. The headline of the report was “a violent Islamophobic blogger group.” The report said with the help of new technology one section of young people is using blog as a tool of anti Islam propaganda. This atheist section of the young defames Allah, the Quran, Prophet Muhammad and other rituals of Islam. Their activity is an aggression to religious Muslims. Blogger Rajib was one of the masterminds to defame Allah and Prophet Muhammad. ‘The Daily Amar Desh’ did the same thing for several consecutive months. At the same time pro ‘BNP’ and ‘Jamaat-e-Islami’ activists engaged with anti propaganda against the ‘Shahbagh Movement’. They said this movement was led by all atheists and leftists. They focused on blogger Rajib and his activities on internet. Along with the ‘Amar Desh’, ‘Naya Diganta’ and ‘Sangram’, two TV channels named ‘Islamic TV’ and ‘Diganta TV’ patronized the propaganda on atheism and ‘Shahbagh Movement’. Different pages of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter campaigned in favor of the agenda led by ‘Amar Desh’ and its allies. The propaganda strengthens the religious sentiment of the mass people. This sentiment was picked by another Islamist group, ‘Hefajat-e-Islam’.

Emergence of Hefajat-E-Islam: On 24th February the Islamist parties called strike all over the country. ‘BNP’ supported the strike. BNP Chairperson ‘Khaleda Zia’ called the ‘Shahbagh Square’ is an ‘Atheists Square’ on 15th March in a meeting. She also mentioned ‘Shahbagh’ was a platform of “atheists and spoilt people”. She threatened that there would be a counter ‘Mancha’ (platform) if the ‘Shahbagh’ demonstrations were not shut down and that people would march towards Dhaka to bring the government down. They organized a long march towards ‘Motijheel’ the commercial hub of the country on April 6th 2013. ‘Hefajat-e-Islam’ announced its supporters will blockade the capital Dhaka from other parts of the country on May 5th. They gave ultimatum to the government and decided to stay in ‘Motijheel’ until their demands are not fulfilled. Law enforcers launched the operation to disperse ‘Hefajat’ activists at night. Nearly 15-27 people died in clashes between law enforcers and Hefajat activists all over the country. The government blocked out two anti government TV channels ‘Diganta TV’ and ‘Islamic TV’ for propagating ‘Hefajat’s protest.

Misperception on death numbers and the media: The casualty figures of ‘Hefajat’ rally in ‘Motijheel’ became the talk of the country. Rumors spread out in the capital on death numbers. Law enforcers cracked down ‘Hefajat’ activists middle of the night. At least 10 people were killed and several others injured in the late-night action by the joint forces drawn from BGB, RAB and police to clear the commercial district, according to sources in different hospitals, including Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Besides, several hundred people were injured in the late-night operation to drive ‘Hefajat’ militants out of ‘Shapla Chattar’ as well as in fighting between the Islamists and law enforcers in Dhaka, Chittagong, Narayanganj and other parts of the country. Of the dead, 10 were killed in Dhaka, eight in Narayanganj, five in Chittagong and one died in Bagerhat. ‘Hefajat-e-Islam Bangladesh’ claimed that over 2,000 of their activists were killed in the joint forces action to flush the Islamists out of ‘Motijheel’ where they were staying on overnight after striking terror in the heart of the city, but Home Minister ‘Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir’ said that a total of nine people had died in clashes in Dhaka on 5th and 6th May. The ‘Hefajat’, however, could not give details of the people they claimed were killed in the late-night action at ‘Motijheel’. They also said, law enforcers removed many dead bodies by city corporation trucks. Trashing the claim of 800 to 3,000 casualties, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Benazir Ahmed said 11 people, including a policeman, died during ‘Hefajat’s rampage and the law enforcers’ operation to flush them out

of ‘Motijheel’ between 5th and 6th May morning. The DMP’s statement comes on the heels of a propaganda campaign on different platforms, especially social networking websites like Facebook that law enforcers killed up to 3,000 ‘Hefajat’ men during the operation. Referring to the propaganda campaigners, DMP Commissioner said a vested quarter had been spreading the rumor. He said If so many people had died during the day-long clashes and the operation, their parents, siblings or relatives would have come looking for them. “But none has come unlike the case of ‘Rana Plaza’ collapse in ‘Savar’.”

Visiting 13 hospitals in the capital, ‘The Daily Star’ gathered that bodies of 13 people, including a policeman’s, were taken to ‘Dhaka Medical College Hospital’ and ‘Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital’ between 5th and early 6th. The demand acclamation of ‘Hefajat’ was accelerated by the ‘BNP-Jamaat’ 18-party alliance. ‘BNP’ leaders claimed that over 1,000 ‘Hefajat’ leaders and activists were killed during the operation. The 18 party alliance compared the operation with the genocide of 25th March, 1971.

18th party alliance claimed in a press conference:

“It is a recurrence of the genocide that took place on the black night of March 25, 1971 and it surpasses the crimes against humanity committed during the country’s liberation war”.

The “newbasherkeela”, a Facebook propagating page run by ‘Chhatra Shibir’, the student wing of ‘Jamaat-e-Islami’, claimed that nearly 2,500 people were killed in the operation. Many of the dead bodies were moved out by the government agencies. Not only social media but pro ‘BNP’-‘Jamaat’ newspapers, TV channels also proliferated that thousands of ‘Hefajat’ activists were died in the crackdown. ‘Amar Desh’ played the same role which they played during the ‘Shahbagh Movement’. The newspaper was trying to make the lie in to true. ‘Amar Desh’ compared the operation with the ‘Jallianwala Bagh’ massacre of 1919. In ‘Jallianwala Bagh’ more than thousands Indian were killed by the British Forces. ‘The Economist’ and ‘Al Jazeera’ played a skeptical role of the death toll. ‘Al Jazeera’ said they got a video footage that the government of Bangladesh provided false death tolls.

It is entirely likely that the death toll as claimed by ‘Hefajat’ and the BNP-led opposition may be significantly exaggerated. But ‘Awami League’ Joint General Secretary, ‘Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif’, told a news conference at the ‘Awami League President’s Dhanmondi office that ‘there was no killing’ during the operation and that ‘the whole ‘Motijheel’ episode was aired live by TV channels. Neither any of these claims tallies with the reality on the ground, though. First of all, sources in different hospitals in the capital, including ‘Dhaka Medical College Hospital’, were quoted by the media as saying that at least 10 people were killed and several others injured in the joint operation. As for live coverage of the operation by TV channels, his claim was based on half-truth. While the television crew was there at ‘Motijheel’ during the operation, there had shown hardly any video footage of the operation Other than repeated shots of members of the joint forces walking towards ‘Shapla Chattar’. The constant crackles of gunshots in the background could only have raised suspicion in the viewers’ mind that indiscriminate shooting took place during the operation. Moreover, the television channels that had shown several people lying in pools of blood during the operation were forced off the air. Bangladeshi human rights NGO ‘Odhikar’ reported they collected the name of 61 people who were died in the ‘Motijheel’. But they denied to publish or give information about death tolls to Bangladesh government or any media. On the contrary International Human Rights watchdog ‘Human Rights Watch’ called for a commission to investigate the original death tolls.

We have seen its reflection on five city corporation election. Hefajat-e-Islam's leaders and activists claimed that more than two thousands of activists were killed in that night. In a public gathering they also said the 'Awami League' led government patronized the atheists and non believers. 'BNP' and its allies claimed the election is a battle between believers and non believers. Consequently the candidates of the 'Awami League' lost in all city corporations. After the election 'Awami League' leaders agreed that the 'Hefajat' issue is the main reason of their failure.

We can set an observation from the above incidents that mass media set an agenda of "mass killing." pro 'BNP' media, new media, opposition leaders and the role of that particular human rights organization who claimed about death toll of 61 but could not publish the address and identity of death toll in front of public brought the synergistic effect on 'Hefajat' claiming'. Synergistic Effect produces an effect greater than other factors which are related with the phenomena. Here mass media, the interpersonal communication and the role of particular human rights activists are liable for bringing synergistic effect on the people. It is strengthened by the "Islam Card." And 'BNP' was successful to convince the people with his publicity. The leading English daily of the country surveyed among 50 voters in Barisal, one of the city corporations. The journalist found that most of them believed the government had killed many 'Hefajat' men and hidden the bodies. We can describe the consent manufacturing process in the below diagram: Figure 5

Discussion

The objective of the study was to find out the role of media in conflict situation. How does media set an agenda on a particular issue and manufacture consent? Researchers tried to discuss the role of media in the perspective of Bangladesh as well as in Western media. It was found that during a war period or in a conflicting situation Western mass media work for the power class or ruling government. From Gulf War to Iraq invasion of 2002, Western media tried to justify the war with the help of media by setting agenda and could manufacture consent. We can say the Agenda Setting function can be suited with the role of mass media in war times. Most of the time western media tried to create agenda to support US government except in Vietnam War [12]. The story of Vietnam and pictures of bloody fights, American casualties, killed Vietnamese civilians, television brought the brutality of war into the comfort of living rooms of America. If we look back into Bangladesh, we can see most of the mass media plays a role in supporting specific political party and they try to serve those political parties by their coverage and report. As 'BNP' and 'Jamaat' are the alliance of 18th party

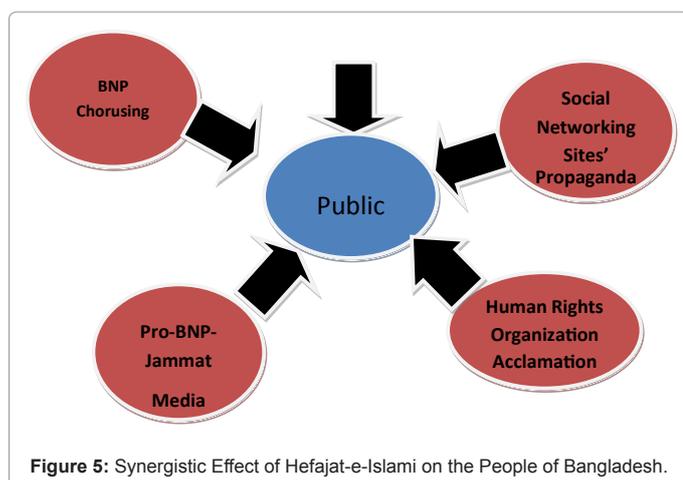


Figure 5: Synergistic Effect of Hefajat-e-Islami on the People of Bangladesh.

and most of the senior 'Jamaat' leaders are allegedly committed for war crime and as 'Shahbag Movement' was a movement of supporting Liberation war of 1971 and this movement has supported war crime tribunal and ask punishment for war criminals. So Pro BNP-Jaamat supported media played a role against the 'Shahbagh Movement', labeled the blogger and online activists as non believer and divert the whole issue as an atheist- theist and finally manipulated the number of death during 'Motijheel Operation' of 5th May. We see the reflection of these variables in five city corporation election. Awami League, the ruling party lost in all cities. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina blamed propaganda for the failure on September 10th. She said:

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance is very strong and efficient at spreading false propaganda. They spread false information against Awami League."

Sheikh Hasina also said

"BNP claimed that several thousand people were killed during the law enforcement agencies' operation on that night. How had it been possible for them to kill several thousand people in the just half an-hour operation!" She blamed the false propaganda of the opposition for the defeat of the Awami League-backed candidates in all five city corporation elections."

However from the examples of above, we can say a part of the Bangladeshi mass media set an agenda for 'Hefajat-e-Islami'. Though they are not the majority part of mass media in Bangladesh but rumors could create confusion and if media has had an intension to set agenda and manufacture consent to serve their own purpose media could do easily. We have seen the reflection of this confusion on five city corporation elections. The Agenda Setting role of particular mass media in Bangladesh and diffusing propaganda and manufacturing consent can be justified with these examples.

Conclusion

The motive of the study is to find out the role of media in agenda setting, propaganda function and manufacturing consent in Bangladesh as well as in Western countries. In Western countries the role of mass media supports the government initiative for any war. But, in Bangladesh, the mass media is divided into two groups. One part of mass media supports government and other part of mass media supports opposition party. But here in Bangladesh even if it is a matter of country's own good still our media use to play conflicting role. Partial role of mass media in Bangladesh always create confusion among audience and with the support of these confusion media playing a significant role in shaping public mind with their agenda setting and propagating function and ultimately manufacture consent. In 'Shahbagh Movement' they were able to make the movement as 'non believers' protest. Whereas 'Shahbagh Movement' was a movement of supporting Liberation War and asking punishment for war criminals. 'The Daily Amar Desh', 'Diganta TV', 'Islamic TV' brought the 'Heafajate-e-Islam' into the platform through their continuous negative coverage against the movement. People started believing the false information of "thousands of deaths" in 'Motijheel Operation'. This unethical function of the media can bring chaotic situation in upcoming national election of 2014. Bangladesh has a long history of using religion in politics. But, when mass media use the religion for specific goal, it becomes more dangerous. We can relate the historic comment of the Dr. Joseph Goebbels. He said, if you say a lie in 99 times it becomes the truth in 100 times. The role of particular Bangladeshi mass media is playing that role. Mass media have immense of power to transmit the message to a large section of the people. If they play

an anarchistic role, it will bring anarchy in the country in near future.

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