International Media Analysis: Critical Analysis Comparing News Reports in Listed West/South Digital Media

Jianan Zhang

The University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia

Abstract. This paper delves into the narrative perspectives of Western and Southern media in news reporting on four themes: war, culture, politics, and Olympic sports. The study reveals that Western media (such as BBC and CNN) tend to adopt narratives that align with the Global News Flow theory and the framework of cultural imperialism, emphasizing individual suffering, the consequences of political and military actions, and the global influence of Western values and innovations. In contrast, Southern media (such as CGTN, Al Jazeera, and WION) actively challenge the dominance of Western mainstream narratives by focusing on local perspectives and realities, employing de-Westernized news narratives. They seek to alter the narrative structure of international news and highlight the development achievements and contributions of Southern countries in culture, sports, and other fields. These counter-narratives align with post-colonial journalism theory, offering potential pathways for Southern countries to gain more voice and challenge Western hegemony in the international news domain. This study contributes to uncovering power dynamics in global news reporting and provides insights for addressing cultural hegemony.

Keywords: Western Media; Southern Media; Global News Flow Theory; Cultural Imperialism; De-Westernized News Narrative.

1. Introduction

After the end of World War II, although formal colonial rule had ended, the colonization of the voice continued. In the past few decades, European countries, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, took advantage of the industrial revolution and rapidly developed media such as news, radio, and television, which made them occupy a dominant position in the field of international news. However, after the war, Asian countries such as China and India focused on economic construction and failed to get their due say in the discourse of international news, resulting in the control of global news by the United States and Britain still exists. This phenomenon of "news duopoly" gives rise to cultural hegemony (Daya Kishan Thussu, 2022). With the advancement of globalization, Western mainstream media occupy a dominant position in global news communication, usually dominating the narrative of news reports, and presenting specific Western values and cultural biases in their reports. This situation not only reflects the West's long-term control over the discourse power of news but also profoundly affects the global cognition and interpretation of news events. In this context, the media of the global South strive to challenge and compete for Western hegemony in this field. By focusing on local perspectives and local realities, southern media actively counter the hegemony of Western mainstream narratives, trying to change the narrative structure of international news and break the cultural domination of the West. This paper will explore the colonial nature of the global news media by analyzing news coverage of four topics (war, culture, politics, Olympic sports) by Western and Southern media, and assess how countries in the South compete for and challenge Western-dominated news discourse through different narrative perspectives. This discussion helps shed light on power dynamics in global news coverage and offers possible paths to counter-cultural hegemony.

2. Case Analysis

For the war topic, I selected Western media BBC's "Rescued Israeli pleads for hostage deal with Hamas" and Southern media CGTN's "Israeli forces rescue hostage from underground tunnel in Gaza." Both reports focused on an Israeli who was rescued by the Israeli army in Gaza. However, the

reports of the Western media BBC more closely reflect the characteristics of the global news flow theory (H. Denis Wu, 2019). The report humanizes the suffering of the Israelis and focuses on the losses Israel faced during the war. The BBC report portrayed Hamas as a terrorist organization, highlighting its role as the perpetrator of kidnappings. This narrative framework fits with Western news production culture (Thomas Hanitzsch, 2019), in which the consequences of political and military actions are often shown through the suffering of individuals as a way to rationalize Israeli military actions. It presents a typical report of cultural imperialism, maintaining the narrative advantage of the West in the conflict. In contrast, the coverage of the southern media CGTN adopted a de-Westernized news narrative (Daya Kishan Thussu, 2022), highlighting the negative impact of the Israeli military operation on the lives of the people of Gaza, such as the specific death toll and the deterioration of living conditions. Calling into question the Israeli government's intervention in humanitarian aid, CGTN's reporting presents the perspective of a structural violence theory (Zophia Edwards, 2021) that sheds light on Israel's power structure during the conflict and its oppression of the people of Gaza. In addition, CGTN's coverage reflects post-colonial journalism theory (Bronwyn Fredericks et al., 2022), which presents a counterattack to Western narratives by criticizing Israel's role in the conflict, showing a more critical perspective on international conflicts.

For the cultural topic, I compared two reports: "How Chinese video game Black Myth: Wukong became a global hit" from Australian media ABC News and "'Black Myth: Wukong' becomes smash hit with over 10 million copies sold" from Chinese media CGTN. Compare the two stories. Both of these news reports focus on the success of the release of Black Myth: Wukong. From the perspective of the article structure, ABC News takes a more dialectical perspective on this Chinese game, which not only explains the achievements of Black Myth: Wukong, but also mentions some of its current controversies. This aligns with the Western-dominated news narrative in the Global news Flow theory (H. Denis Wu, 2019), especially by emphasizing controversy to influence the public's overall perception of the game. While the title of the article focuses on the success of the game, the two references to controversy and the use of a twist sentence reinforce this focus, a linguistic strategy that highlights the implicit criticism of Western media coverage in the context of a structural bias (Matthew Leroy, 2023). In addition, when describing the transformation of the early Chinese game market, ABC News pointed out how China's pirated game market and cheap labor force attracted foreign companies to outsource production, thus promoting the development of Chinese games. This narrative mode implies that the innovation and cultural influence of Western video games is regarded as a global benchmark. This narrative framework is also consistent with cultural imperialism, indirectly alluding to the influence of Western standards and innovations on global cultural products, and embodies the underlying questioning of the success of Chinese games from a Western perspective. In contrast, CGTN focuses more on data to show the Black Myth: WuKong's sales, revenue, etc., highlighting its success and adopting a de-Westernized narrative (Daya Kishan Thussu, 2022). CGTN's report highlights the unique innovation of the Chinese game industry and does not directly compare it with the Western game industry, instead focusing on the contribution of local culture to the global market. This counter-narrative perspective is in line with post-colonial journalism theory (Bronwyn Fredericks et al., 2022), which presents CGTN's challenge to Western narratives by emphasizing the influence of indigenous cultures on a global scale.

For the political topic, I chose Southern media WION (India)'s “X goes offline in Brazil as Musk blasts Supreme Court's 'pseudo-judge'” and Western media BBC's “Musk's X banned in Brazil after disinformation row.” The BBC report first mentioned X's (formerly Twitter) failure to comply with a Brazilian government order to appoint a new legal representative, describing the incident as a "brawl". This wording suggests that the Western media tends to treat the incident as a mismanagement or legal dispute, lacking an in-depth discussion of the sovereignty of the Brazilian government and the legitimacy of law enforcement. This narrative is in line with the global news flow theory (H. Denis Wu, 2019), in which Western mainstream media tend to focus on Western standards and interests when reporting on non-Western countries, ignoring the sovereignty needs of local countries. The BBC also noted the long-running dispute between Judge Moraes and X, suggesting that the

Brazilian judge's actions may have been influenced by personal vendettas or deliberate targeting of Western tech companies. This narrative reflects the logic of cultural imperialism, which portrays legal initiatives in non-Western countries as a challenge to Western technology giants, exhibiting a degree of bias. In contrast, a report by the southern media WION clearly explains the reasons for the Brazilian government's decision to ban it and offers solutions. This coverage follows the de-Westernization narrative (Daya Kishan Thussu, 2022), highlighting the challenge of Western tech giants to the legal and governance structures of southern countries. At the same time, WION also reported the statements of both sides, showing an even-handed attitude. This neutral stance is in line with post-colonial journalism theory (Bronwyn Fredericks et al., 2022), which questions the cultural and political influence of Western technology firms on a global scale through a counter-narrative perspective, and highlights the legitimacy of the legal and governance structures of Southern countries.

For the Olympic sports topic, I selected Western media's "The Olympics have long promoted safe sex. Now it wants to focus on pleasure" and Al Jazeera's "Boxer Nikhat Zareen fighting for first Indian Olympics gold at Paris 2024." Starting with the issue of condoms being handed out by athletes during the Olympics, CNN's report not only focused on athletes' safe sex practices (such as contraception and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases) but also emphasized the importance of sexual pleasure. CNN explained the shift in attitude on the topic as a social change. This reporting perspective reflects the liberal narrative of Western media in the new media era (Paolo Mancini, 2024), which emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and social reform, and reflects the mainstream narrative perspective that Western media has always paid attention to individual rights and social progress. According to the global news flow theory (H. Denis Wu, 2019), this kind of reporting reflects the analytical framework of Western news organizations on international events, embedding the universal value of individual rights and freedoms through multi-angle discussions, thus pushing global issues closer to their cultural concepts. On the other hand, Al Jazeera's report focuses on Indian female boxer Nikhat Zareen, introducing her achievements in the field of sports. By highlighting female athletes, Al Jazeera refutes the narrative of male European, and American athletes as protagonists which is common in Western media sports coverage. This counter-narrative strategy echoes the de-Westernization narrative (Daya Kishan Thussu, 2022), which emphasizes the contributions of southern countries and female athletes. By portraying Zareen's efforts to win gold for India and her proud narrative of inspiring women in her hometown to take up boxing, Al Jazeera not only casts a positive image of India but may also implicitly criticize the Western media for ignoring or underestimating the achievements of athletes from southern countries. This narrative is in line with post-colonial journalism theory (Bronwyn Fredericks et al., 2022), which emphasizes the gradual development of southern countries in the field of sports and seeks to break the monopoly position of Western countries.

3. Conclusion

By analyzing the narrative perspectives of Western and Southern news media on the themes of war, culture, politics, and Olympic sports, I believe that providing more global southern counter-narratives is more suitable to solve the problem of Western dominance in the international news field. First of all, the rise of digital platforms enables people to access all kinds of news from media organizations through the Internet without restriction, providing more anti-narratives of the global South and enabling people around the world to have more access to the news of countries in the South to understand these countries (Daya Kishan Thussu, 2022). This change in the media environment makes it possible to provide more counter-narratives of the global South, and can effectively balance the monopoly of Western mainstream media in the power of news discourse. As this analysis shows, southern media such as Al Jazeera and WION, through a de-Westernized counter-narrative approach, present a unique perspective on a variety of issues such as international politics, war, and culture, which can provide a more comprehensive and diversified understanding for global readers.

Second, the global South counter-narrative can inspire readers to reflect on the Western narrative and make them think and discriminate more deeply when faced with the same news events. By presenting different narrative frames under the same theme, Southern media can make readers realize that news reporting is not simply a presentation of facts, but is subject to different political, cultural, and historical contexts (Bronwyn Fredericks et al., 2022). This provision of multiple narratives helps to break the global discourse monopoly constructed by Western mainstream media through cultural imperialism and allows southern countries to have an effective voice in international affairs.

Finally, southern media challenged the Western news duopoly through counter-narratives (H. Denis Wu, 2019), as Al Jazeera highlighted in its report on Nikhat Zareen, the rise of southern countries in sports. Such reports are not only conducive to building a positive image of the southern countries but also a counterattack to the Western media's long-standing neglect of the sports development of the southern countries. This kind of counter-narrative helps to change the influence of the dominant position of Western media so that more readers begin to pay attention to and believe in the news narrative perspective of Southern media.

Therefore, I believe that providing more global South counter-narratives is an effective strategy to weaken and challenge the dominance of the West in global journalism. Providing more global South counter-narratives is not only conducive to creating a diversified news media environment but also makes it easier for readers who have long been influenced by Western media's main narrative news to accept the information provided by Southern media.

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