

**Media in the Age of Globalization.  
Iranian Media and Public Experience from Cold War Era  
towards Globalization**

Ali Akbar Abdolrashidi

Abstract

In the region of media, these years and decades are named after the satellite and internet media. Developing countries are sometimes accused by the developed world of not having free and independent media. They say the media in the developing world are biased, unprofessional and are not satisfying their audience. They claim that freedom of media in their communities may be copied in the developing countries.

The developed world may have free, independent and balanced media in their own societies when they target their domestic audiences. But are they impartially performing their journalistic activities when their satellite and internet stories address people of other countries? Some people in the developing countries intend to believe that the performance of the media in the developed world is often flavored with conspiracy and interference.

I take Iranian media experience as an example to show how the Western and even Eastern media treated us during the period from the Cold War up to the age of Globalization.

Iran as a developing country is located at the very strategically important crossroads, in south-west Asia or in the Middle East. In the opinion of the supporters of the theory of the Third World War, Iran is a place where the 3<sup>rd</sup> World War started, in 1945 and where it stopped in the late 1988.

Globalization of media perhaps began when the first newspaper or radio broadcast from one community reached another community. Today we are talking about globalization and media as if all the people around the world have the same experience and/or understanding of these two words.

Globalization has developed through sophisticated experience channels and media have matured on the basis of different style of performance in every corner of the globe.

What does Globalization mean?

Concepts of Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, Imperialism, Hegemony, Capitalism, Interference, Intervention, Exploitation and Expansionism were used almost in very close if not in similar meanings. Now we have a new term of Globalization. In the developed world it means something which is different from it in the developing world.

Does Globalization encourage similar meaning whatsoever with those previous terms?

During the Cold War there were two opposite and contradicting categories of concepts in the mind of people of the so-called third world. If they felt to be Aligned, Exploited, Colonized and Occupied they wished to portray their country and their position in the shadow of Independence, Freedom, Equality, Self –Determination, Non-Alignment, Revolution and Sovereignty.

Because of the historical colonial performance of big powers in the region, and in Asian and African countries including Iran, Britain and later USA were identified as the leaders of Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, Imperialism, Hegemony, Interference, Intervention, Capitalism, Exploitation and Expansionism.

This was, perhaps, the terminology of the 1940s among nations who were waging their independence wars. French, German and Italy were not identified as such at least in Iran.

Germany and Italy were defeated in the Second World War and there was no excuse for accusing them with these terms. France and the French Revolution, in fact, were once inspiring people around the world such as the Iranian Constitutional Movement in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Soviet Union, due to its revolution of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Russia, was identified in the eye of World Proletariat as the symbol of Revolution and then Independence, Self – Determination, Equality, and Sovereignty. The effective role of leftist movements in countries such as Iran under the influence and sponsorship of Moscow to promote the Soviet social and political system could not be ruled out.

Political and Social Movements of the 1930s and the 1940s in Iran were mostly Marxism-oriented. The leftist parties and movements were very much active in Iran until the 1950s. Therefore in this period the USSR was never identified as a symbol of Colonialism.

During World War II, Iran was invaded and partly occupied by both Britain and the Soviet Union. Britain and other Allied members had been annoyed when Iranian government refused their demands to expel all Nazi German agents and emissaries from the country. When Nazi forces reached Stalingrad, the Allied leaders urgently needed to transport reinforcements from Persian Gulf across Iran to the Soviet Union.

As Iran was located on a very important geopolitical and geostrategic point on the southern borders of the USSR, the Allied powers as well as the Axis powers, were using local and overseas media to monopolize their dominance on Iran, as they called it later, the Bridge of Victory.

The Nazi Germans have established the first Foreign Persian radio service beamed on Iran to promote the interests of Adolf Hitler's Germany. There are still Iranians who remember when in the early 1940s Berlin Radio was broadcasting the Persian translation of Adolf Hitler's furious speeches and his daily military communiqués.

To offset the German presence, influence and propaganda in Iran, Britain and the Soviet Union simultaneously invaded Iran on (August 26) 1941, the Soviets from the northwest and

the British across the Iraqi frontier from the west and at the head of the Persian Gulf in the south.

To make all the above possible, the British established a Persian Radio Service in their British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) service to propagate their interests and the interests of Allied Forces.

The BBC Persian radio has played a major role in relations between the UK and the Persian-speaking world at that crucial political period. Sponsored by the British government, the BBC Persian broadcasts were initially and particularly against Nazi influence and pro-Nazi elements in Iran.

As a result of this open mission, in the opinion of Iranians, the trust in BBC's news, facts, figures and information remained in the shadow of uncertainty.

In 1945 and immediately after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Soviet forces occupied a part of Iran, Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, and appointed their puppet regimes there. This event is the first military aggressive engagement after the collapse of the Nazi regime that marked the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

The Soviets established their newspapers and other media in the occupied region with a local appearance that continued their activities for decades and even after the Soviet withdrawal from Iran. Pro-Soviet political parties were massively supported by the Russian journalists and media and were propagating the Soviet cause and interest in Iran by appealing to lies, accusations, allegations and charges against Iranian and anti-Soviet local elements and foreigners living or working in Iran. Missing were fact, figure and reliable information.

During the period between 1945 and early 1950s the British media, facing the new Soviet challenge in Iran, were very active in broadcasting and propagating stories to manipulate the will and the mind of their Iranian speaking audience.

The rise of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh as the Prime Minister of Iran, and his attempts to nationalize the Iranian oil industry brought new aspects to the Iranian experience of Western and Eastern media performance.

Feeling a fresh challenge, the BBC was not only scratching the image of Iranian national Oil Movement, which was an Iranian independence movement, but preparing the ground for the military coup against Mossadegh too.

In this period, the Pro-Soviet media were also very active in Iran to offset the British influence and to press Iranian authorities to grant an oil share to Moscow.

In 1970s strategic changes started to be felt in the region. After the withdrawal of British forces from the region and arrival of US Forces instead, new independent countries came into existence in the southern borders of the Persian Gulf and new roles were put on the shoulders of the Shah of Iran to protect the interests of Britain and the USA.

The Western press began their propaganda to legitimize the Shah's new role in the region. It coincided with new rounds of Marxists media activities in Iran, Oman and Yemen. Moscow Radio and other local radios tried to support these Marxists.

It is in the background of this East-West media battle that Iranian understanding of media activities and the meaning of globalization have shaped.

Iranians started to believe that the CNN, as the first international TV service in the 1980s, was telling the world what to see, what to listen and what to believe. The CNN model was soon followed by the BBC World, DW and others.

But it was not the end.

The 8-year Iraqi war against Iran in 1980s brought a new chapter in the records of the Western and Eastern media performance. Almost all Western and Eastern media together with some regional pro-Saddam media were actively working to legitimize the Iraqi war against Iran.

Many developments in this war such as using Iraqi chemical weapons against Iran were practically ignored in the early stages of war when such news could damage the aggressive attempts of Saddam and many more were highlighted when they could tarnish the Iranian defense.

The Western and the Soviet media were overtly supporting Saddam Hussein and Iraqi invasion of Iran. Iranian people who were tangibly experiencing the oppression of Iraqi war did not see any just, free, independent and fair coverage of war in these media.

At the end of the 8-year Iraqi war, the Cold War ended, The USSR was disintegrated and a New World Order came into existence.

Almost a decade after the introduction of New World Order, new hostilities resulted in wars at least in Iraq, Afghanistan and now in Pakistan. Some powerful and influential Western media, at least those beamed on our region, are engaged in attempts to legitimize these new wars in the region and to ignore some important facts and figures.

If journalism means the profession of writing, broadcasting and disseminating true and documented information to enlighten the people's minds, Iranians as many other people in the world feel very much far from being treated as such by the trans-border media of other countries.

Today the question is whether, on the basis of historical experience, the Western powerful media project true information, facts and figures when they reach us. Alternatively does the world public hear truth about us? Many Iranians doubt it.

The media war is more serious than the military war. Image making is the first and foremost chapter that prepares the ground for other actions. Media are apparently not performing what they originally posed to be.

Is this the real identity of modern and Globalized Media?

Today in the eye of some Iranians, Globalization is somehow identified with old concepts of Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, Imperialism, Hegemony, Capitalism, Interference, Intervention, Exploitation and Expansionism.

If it is not the case, then what does the Globalized Media mean?