Relationship between media outlet and religious conflict

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ABSTRACT

This study is the relationship between media outlet and religious conflict. New media outlets, enabled by modern technology, are having far-reaching and profound impact on society unlike any previous time in history. Technological advances have fueled globalization by connecting cultures and transcending national borders. There are a number of failings with how religion is represented in the mainstream media, many well documented. The media needs to be held to account, for example, for incorrect stories about particular religious groups. The Independent Press Standards Organisation needs to be tougher and make sure that corrections and retractions are given weight equal to the original erroneous article. The media have come to play an ever more prominent role in social and cultural life since the emergence of the so-called "mass media" in the late nineteenth century.

Keywords: Relationship, Media outlet, religious, conflict.

INTRODUCTION

New media outlets, enabled by modern technology, are having far-reaching and profound impact on society unlike any previous time in history. Technological advances have fueled globalization by connecting cultures and transcending national borders. While the media's reach is not new, the way in which individuals are interacting with media has changed dramatically Seemingly overnight, unidirectional and highly-censored transmission of transmission to the masses has transformed into an interactive environment marked by decreased censorship, rising freedom and a belief that news is no longer only the journalist's domain: news can come from anyone, anywhere, at any time. [1] argues that media can either act as a bridge between different views, exposing both sides to the other's views and forging a common culture or stressing differences Resulting in the highlight of differences leading to conflict. [2] goes on to argue that, "media with a particular orientation (secular or religious) may intensify differences by Insulating the group it represents, reporting primarily views in line with that group's worldview and negatively portraying the opposing side". [3] classified religious divisions into two different types that separate citizens into different camps such as Catholics and Protestants we link what is happening in the region to various theories that can aid in explaining what is happening in the region. To achieve this objective, we look at the various media outlets in the region and examine the link between these media availability and expansion and its use to communicate to the public various religious ideologies that may create intolerance and conflict within the society.

Throughout our world, religious values remain an important Influence on individual decision-making and behavior [4] [5]. The legacies of Judaism, Christianity and Muslims continue to impact the lives of billions; not only in the Middle East where they started, but around the globe, having significant impact on peoples' daily lives and decisions from how to dress, what not to eat, to how and where to worship. Ancient Mesopotamia was the ideological origin

for all three of this tradition. This shared history among Judaism, Christianinty and Muslims has provided them a shared theological base, yet they have been in constant struggle with one another for hundreds of years.

Recently, scholars have turned their attention to studying how technology affects religious beliefs and values [6] claimed that technology has the power to shape the lives of human beings. An argument could be made that advances in technology such as Satellite Networks, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have not only provided new channels of media distribution but have additionally changed how people obtain information [7]. With regard to the mix of Judaism, Islam, and Christian in the Middle East, this papers looks at the role new media outlets play in shaping religious views in the nation. [8] stated that, "The genie of religion has been let out of the bottle and many liberals and academics want to engage with it while others want to put it firmly back in the bottle. This is an attempt to explore the relationship between media outlets expansion and the increased religious conflict in the society.

Media Outlet

Media publication or broadcast program that provides news and feature stories to the public through various distribution channels. Media outlets include newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet [9]. Various Media outlets, convey meaning in different dimensions that vary from that of that from each other and these has great effect on religion because many go against the ethics which many will fail to understand.

Religion

Human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of especial reverence. It is also commonly regarded as consisting of the way people deal with ultimate concerns about their lives and their fate after death. In many traditions, this relation and these concerns are expressed in terms of one's relationship with or attitude toward gods or spirits; in more humanistic or naturalistic forms of religion, they are expressed in terms of one's relationship with or attitudes toward the broader human community or the natural world [10]. In many religions, texts are deemed to have scriptural status, and people are esteemed to be invested with spiritual or moral authority. Believers and worshippers participate in and are often enjoined to perform devotional or contemplative practices such as prayer, meditation, or particular rituals. Worship, moral conduct, right belief, and participation in religious institutions are among the constituent elements of the religious life.

Media and religion

Major efforts have been exhausted bringing religion closer to media (rather than bringing media closer to religion), or to break down the traditional boundaries between the "religious" and the "media." In light of such efforts and various research some have tried to show the necessity of building new bridges between religion and media. These attempts have even made scholars believe that in the "media age," the secular is sacred and the sacred is secular [11]. This endeavor was aimed at the unification of the two important elements of contemporary human life, which historically could also be understood in the context of challenging the relationship between science and religion. Recent attention to mainstream media reveals that relations between religion and media appear to be breaking down. A two-year investigation into the role of religion in public life reported that virtually everyone involved expressed concern about how religion and belief is portrayed by the media. That's perhaps not surprising, considering that most who participated voluntarily in the investigation probably did so because they were concerned [12].

That concern is being further explored by a new All Party Parliamentary Group on religious

literacy in the media, led by Bolton MP Yasmin Qureshi. Their stated objectives are: 'to work for greater religious literacy in both media and politics; to foster a better understanding and representation of religion in media coverage of news and culture, noting the priority of religion as a prime motivator of individuals and communities; to encourage more diversity in media representation of religion; to work towards a Seventh Public Purpose for the BBC in Charter Renewal: to promote religious literacy' [13].

Religious representation in the media

There are a number of failings with how religion is represented in the mainstream media, many well documented [14]. The media needs to be held to account, for example, for incorrect stories about particular religious groups. The Independent Press Standards Organisation needs to be tougher and make sure that corrections and retractions are given weight equal to the original erroneous article.

The unfair treatment of Muslims by certain journalists is another failing of the media. In particular that media attention to religion often consists of stories about 'extremist' Muslims, ignoring the high levels of Christian extremism that could also be described as such.

The story of good Christian/bad Muslim is told both by expression and omission, by naming, or not naming, the religion or ethnicity of terrorists. For example, Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik is not described by the media as a Christian terrorist, although he self-identified as a Christian and would-be protector of European Christianity [15]. The American religious scholar Stephen Prothero points out that Christians swiftly denounced him, describing his actions as political and not religious, a generosity not extended to Muslims who murder for political-religious reasons.

The massacre at Srebrenica in 1995 is another example. This is widely described by media as the killing of 8,000 'Muslim' men and boys by 'Serbs', without noting their religion as Christians [16]. The Serb military and political leaders charged with war crimes are not referred to as Christian terrorists. That is apparently not 'the story'.

The decision of how to shape a 'story' is driven by underlying cultural norms. Here the unspoken story, that seems to be a national trope, is "Muslims are bad and Christians are good" and the 'nation' – or white Englishness – must be protected. It was interesting that The Mirror noted David Cameron repeated for the second year in his annual Christmas message that Britain was a 'Christian country'.

It is somewhat surprising then that Christians who are generally treated favourably by the media and privileged in the public sphere (from the representation of Bishops in the House of Lords, to Church of England run state schools and the broadcast of Sunday morning church services on the BBC), are so quick and professionally slick in defending themselves, arguing that they are a badly neglected and misunderstood section of society [17].

Indeed while media misrepresentations most often concern Muslims, the most vocal complainers are Christians. Stuart and Ahmed conducted a detailed media analysis of three best-selling British daily newspapers: the left-leaning Guardian, right-leaning Daily Telegraph, and right-leaning tabloid, Daily Mail. Their analysis covered reports of 'claims' against a public or private organization by individuals on religious grounds. They found that between 2000 and 2010, Christians comprised 67 per cent of reported claims covered by the media, Muslims 31 percent, and the other main religious groups less than 10 percent. Christians also participated in most (96 percent) of the discrimination claims.

Deeper conflict

With Christianity so dominant and relatively accepted by the media, a look to more fundamental, ancient and even ontological concerns can help explain the Christian anxiety with the media.

First, I suggest from my experience both as a former journalist and, currently, as a sociology of religion scholar, that each side would claim it speaks 'the truth'. Media and religion are institutions largely composed of ardent, hard-working people who believe in what they do. 'Belief' is understood here as something deeper and more significant than just signing up to a series of statements about the existence of gods or press regulations but believing in gods or press standards means trusting those sources and acting in specific ways because of that belief.

In practice, both religious and media people often fail to do that. Their failures do not prevent them from clinging to their idea that the truth they speak is sacred, especially when they understand 'sacred' as something that is, as [9] has argued, 'non-negotiable'. When two different groups of people each claim that their truth is non-negotiable, problems are inevitable. What is needed is a form of religious literacy that [2] describes as focusing less on an exchange of facts and more on a better quality of conversation.

To complicate the conversation further, I suggest, is a belief held by both journalists and religious people that they have the true 'story', as if the 'story' is already out there, pre-packaged and simply awaiting uncovering. In practice, the 'truth' is composed of multiple stories. Media and religion will choose, and create, one. It's what's called 'an angle'.

The second area of potential conflict between religion and media pertains to 'the source'. My multi-dimensional analysis of religion concluded that it is more often the 'source' rather than the 'content' that divides religious and non-religious people. Journalists will often call upon 'experts' to comment on a story because they believe that knowledge can and is created through education, training and practice. Such experts are typically schooled in universities or academies of some kind. Religious people may view those secular sources with suspicion and deride the research that backs the experts' claims.

The final area of conflict is, I suggest, the claim to legitimate authority. Not only does media and religion tell their chosen story, they explain why the events happened. Media professionals see themselves as legitimate commentators on what happens and why. Particularly when events are surprising or disturbing, journalists, columnists and leader writers rush to offer explanations and, taking a quasi-religious role, try to shape chaos into order. Such matters are traditionally seen as the province of the religious leader, acting with a prophetic voice.

The media calls this process 'analysis'; religions call it 'theodicy'. How can people explain why terrorists kill innocent people in the name of religion? A humanistic explanation will focus on human-oriented details such as mental health, ideology or social conditions by way of explanation. A religious (or at least monotheistic) explanation may try to explain why an all-powerful, all-loving God would permit such things to happen, and consider what a proper religious response would be [15]. This may include praying, reaching out to others on inter-faith networks and, ultimately, converting people from Islam to Christianity.

The differences and areas of conflict between religion and the media appear irreconcilable. They could, however, be improved when each side recognizes the other's equally defensible claim.

CONCLUSION

The media have come to play an ever more prominent role in social and cultural life since the emergence of the so-called "mass media" in the late nineteenth century. Before that time, even though the media through which social and cultural knowledge were shared (oral transmission, ritual performance, writing, visual representation, and printing) were vital, they were more tacit and transparent to the processes they enabled. Today, in a range of social and cultural contexts, the media are fore grounded, even determinative. The mass

media emerged as the result of interacting technological and social developments. Mechanized printing, which developed with the industrial revolution and found its way into mass-market communication in Britain in the 1870s, brought about major changes in production, in reception, and in the political economy of media.

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