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PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS IN A CHANGING WORLD

THE GLOBAL SOLIDARITY CRISIS

EDITOR: AGUSTINUS RYADI



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 globalsolidarity@ukwms.ac.id

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the Double Standard in War Journalism and Its Effect to the Global Solidarity Crisis

Christine Susanto

Institutum Theologicum Ioannis Mariae Vianney Surabayanum (IMAVI), Surabaya, Indonesia
gemelosalegres@gmail.com

Abstract

The current war of Russia-Ukraine once again challenges us with the ethical problem of war journalism, that is prone to worsening the ongoing global solidarity crisis through ideology polarization. This is caused by the double standard that exists in war reporting where different wars are reported using different interpretations of the principles of objectivity and impartiality. This results in biased portrayal of reports such as attempts to reduce the scale of military aggression when it is done by a political ally while overblowing it when it is done by a political enemy.

Such double standard and manipulation of journalism principles done deliberately to polarize the public is dangerous. An example is the popular reaction of the Indonesians on the Russian-Ukraine war. It creates a public in which many people are blinded by sectoral ego and sentimental reasoning. It makes people less critical of the party that they consider as political ally. Human rights violations done by the ally in the war is then easily dismissed. This causes cold indifference towards the sufferings of the civilians in the warzone. Invasions and military aggressions are more easily justified. World peace is becoming a lesser priority in an increasingly ideologically polarized global society.

This paper aims to seek the root cause of the problem of the double standard in war reporting, especially with regards to how the journalism ethical principles should be interpreted so as to render journalism less prone to manipulation of ethical principles, hence less prone to double standard.

The philosophy of Jürgen Habermas is used to analyse problems regarding the confusion in the interpretation of the principles of journalism objectivity and impartiality. Also, Habermas' theory of communicative action and the colonialization of the lifeworld is used to explain the impact of the double standard of war journalism towards the increase in the global solidarity crisis.

Keyword: journalism, war, ethics, Habermas, solidarity crisis

1. Introduction

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has once again raised the issue of journalism ethics. One particular issue that is discussed in this paper is the double standard in the reporting of one war versus another where the exact same principles of journalism ethics are interpreted and applied differently in order to frame the wars according to the political interest of the news companies. This is done to sway the global public opinion on these wars, to influence them to choose sides, to love one party and hate the other. This escalates the tension

and deepens the division between global communities, thus worsening the global solidarity crisis that the world is facing today.

In Indonesia, the public continues to sympathize with Russia's position in the war, resulting in the reduced public sense of solidarity towards the sufferings of the Ukrainian civilians—something quite unusual given the Indonesians' past solidarity towards the victims of war in Myanmar, Palestine, and Iraq. This is due to the strong anti-American sentiment in Indonesia which results from the perceived “hypocrisy of the west”, that is the double standard treatment of the west towards the rest of the world. This includes the double standard in war journalism where wars are portrayed differently by the western media based not on a fair application of journalism ethics but based on the western countries' political interest (Dharmaputra, 2022). We see this similar phenomenon happening in many countries also with the previous wars.

The deliberate polarizing by the media is creating a worldwide public that more readily supports military invasions and aggressions, a public with reduced capability to empathize, a public where universal human rights is put as a second priority over ideology. World peace is becoming a lesser priority in an increasingly ideologically polarized global society. The risk of World War III now becomes increasingly real.

This paper seeks to first analyze the root cause of the double standard practice in war journalism. A special emphasis is made to the principles of objectivity and impartiality since those two principles are often cited as reasons for the double standard war reporting, suggesting that there may be a deliberate manipulation of the ethical principles of journalism to create an ideologically polarized global society. This poses a pressing question of how should the ethical principles of impartiality and objectivity be interpreted in order to best serve the true purpose of journalism in a democratic society?

The philosophy of Jürgen Habermas is used to analyze problems regarding the confusion in the interpretation of the principles of journalism objectivity and impartiality. Also, Habermas' theory of communicative action and the colonialization of the lifeworld is used to explain the impact of the double standard of war journalism towards the increase in the global solidarity crisis.

2. The Journalists' Dilemma: The Double Standard in War Reporting. A Manipulation of Journalism Ethical Principles?

In war journalism, the journalist is presented with dilemmas resulting from the tension between the right of the public to know the real condition of the war, versus the political interest of the government and the media companies which prompts the journalist and/or editors to hide the real condition of the war in their reports. This is one of the most controversial issues in war journalism (also in journalism in general), that is the media bias resulting from the deliberate manipulation of news reporting. Such practices include bias selection of data obtained from the

frontline, biased choice of language and even strategic real-life video coverage to match the image of the war that is being portrayed to the public (Eilders, 2005, pp. 640, 642, 644)

In the Israeli conflict with Lebanon in the 1990s, BBC journalists were told not to describe the Israeli forces as “occupying forces”, and the Lebanese forces must not be described as “resistance” but as “military operations against Israeli forces”. They were told that this must be done for the sake of the journalism principle of impartiality (Harb, 2022). Yet in this ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, the western media is free to call the situation as it is—as an invasion. Western journalists are free to describe the actual condition of the war, about Russian army deliberately targeting civilians and shelling residential areas, causing the deaths of many innocent civilians including children. Compare this to the western coverage of Israel-Lebanon conflict where journalists were told not to describe the Israeli shelling of Lebanon residential areas and not to portray the real intensity of the suffering of the civilians (Harb, 2022). Also in 2014, a British journalist Jon Snow was criticized for his video which covered the real situation in Gaza where the Israeli’s indiscriminate shelling killed many innocent children (Channel 4 News, 2014). The BBC News Chief described it as a violation of journalism impartiality (Frost, 2014).

These examples show quite clearly that there is a serious double standard problem in the interpretation and the execution of the journalism principle of impartiality. One may think that since Britain is a political ally of Israel which was the occupying force of Lebanon and the perpetrator of the indiscriminate shelling in Gaza, the British-based BBC made an effort to portray a less violent, more humane image of the Israeli military aggression. This could actually be seen as violations of the journalism principles. The principle of truthfulness is breached because there is a distortion of the truth such as the concealment of important facts; the principle of objectivity/independence is violated because the news companies have political interest in framing the report as such; the principle of fairness or impartiality is violated because the other side of the war (the side of Lebanon and Gaza) was not fairly reported. Hence it can be argued that BBC manipulated the ethical principles of journalism to serve a specific interest, that of the British government and the BBC itself. BBC is being partial precisely by claiming to be impartial. This is a manipulation of journalism ethical principles.

Compare this to the reporting of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war in which Britain is supporting Ukraine and considers Russia as its enemy. Here it serves British political interest to report the actual condition of the war, that is to report the military aggressions of Russia and the sufferings of the civilians. Therefore, BBC and other western media is using words such as “invasion” (BBC, 2022) and “deliberately targeting civilians” (Casciani, 2022) which they had avoided when reporting on Israel’s military aggressions in Lebanon.

It is evident that double standard in war journalism exists. Faced by this dilemma, some journalists have voiced the need to reevaluate the ethical principles of journalism. This includes questioning the principles of impartiality and objectivity. One argument states that, given the

existence of double standard in war reporting, absolute objectivity, impartiality and neutrality may not always be the key to quality journalism (Harb, 2022). Martin Bell, a former war correspondent of the BBC, once advocated that the emphasis on the moral duty to tell the truth, however inconvenient, must be put above the professional obligation to be impartial. (McLaughlin, 2022, p. 33)

Is it true that those journalism ethical principles should be made optional as suggested by journalists such as Zahera (Harb, 2022) and Greg (McLaughlin, 2022, p. 33), or does the problem lie elsewhere? In this paper, I suggest that the problem lies in the confusion of how the ethical principles of objectivity, impartiality and neutrality are interpreted by the journalists to be equivalent to being value-free. Being impartial or neutral should not be interpreted as being value-free. This interpretational error makes it easier for the media companies to manipulate the principles to justify the double standard in reporting. How then should the terms be interpreted? In order to answer this question, one must first return to the essence of journalism, its purpose (which is never value-free) and how the ethical principles ensure that journalism stay true to its cause.

3. Journalism—Its Purpose and Ethical Principles

3.1. The Purpose of Journalism

We shall begin by asking what is journalism and what purpose does it serve? In principle, journalism is the action of investigating and reporting real events, usually recent or ongoing events, through the media for public consumption (Britannica, 2020). The word journalism comes from the French word ‘journalisme’—the business of writing, editing, or publishing a newspaper or public journal. The root word is ‘journal’ which means ‘that which takes place daily’. From there, the word took on other meanings such as ‘book for inventories and daily accounts’, ‘personal diary’, and ‘daily publication’ (Harper, D., (n.d.)). Hence, we see that journalism exists to accurately inform the public about the existence of daily events, issues and other information, especially those which affect the lives of people.

However, in today’s world journalism is more than just the reporting of daily events; it plays a central ethical role in our society. The underlying purpose of journalism today is to empower the informed through accurate and reliable information to help them to think more comprehensively, form more rational opinions and make better decisions which are beneficial for themselves and their community. Hence the loyalty of journalism is towards the public it is serving. Its purpose is public empowerment. (Lewis, 2006, pp. 305-308)

But why must journalism serve the public? Why is public empowerment so important? The answer is because we currently live in a democratic society. Democracy is the contemporary ideal of how we should co-exist as a society and as a nation. It is a system of governance where the people have the right to decide on important public matters which affects their wellbeing and that of the society they live in. The underlying cause is a more ethical treatment of human

where man as a conscious and thinking being should have his 'freedom of being' be respected. Hence a key feature in democracy is rational participative dialogue; there needs to be a process of public reasoning where public dialog exists in a rational way so that the decisions made by the public are rational ones. (Lewis, 2006, p. 305-308)

In order for this to happen, the public needs access to a wide variety of reliable and updated information. Therefore, quality journalism is indispensable for the wellbeing of a truly democratic society. This means that the essence of journalism in a democratic country is never value-free. Journalism exists for a clear ethical purpose: to serve the democratic public by empowering it to act towards the common good, that is towards peace, fairness, equality, freedom, wellbeing and other values that enable us to live and thrive as human beings. Precisely because it is not value free, journalism can serve as a watchdog for the society and a voice for the voiceless.

3.2. The Ethical Principles of Journalism

In order to stay true to its nature and serve its purpose, journalism needs to operate on certain basic principles⁹⁰ (Jennings, 1999) (IFJ, 2019):

1. Truthfulness. "Respect for the facts and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist". (IFJ, 2019). Information that is false must not be accepted. Distorting facts or misleading report to give false impression to the public is forbidden.
2. Objectivity/Independence. A journalist must avoid reports which involves his interest where his personal benefit is served, such that it causes bias in reporting or gives the impression of bias. He will present the verified facts without injecting his personal opinion. He will avoid confusing his work with advertising or propaganda. He must also refrain from insider trading or market manipulation. He will not engage in any activity that puts his independence in danger.
3. Impartiality/Fairness. Journalist must be neutral when presenting facts. He shall ensure that his reports do not contribute to hatred, prejudice and discrimination on grounds such as "geographical, social or ethnic origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability, political and other opinions." (IFJ, 2019).
4. Diligence. A good and accurate understanding of the subject matter is a must. Therefore, careful gathering of data and presentation of facts is required.
5. Accountability. A journalist must be prepared to accept criticism and be accountable for his work. He shall rectify any errors on published reports in a timely, explicit, complete and transparent manner.

3.3. The Concern about War Journalism in Brief

Simply put, war journalism is the reporting of news first-hand from the warzone. The main purpose is to let the public know about what is really happening in the front-lines. Since

⁹⁰ Journalism code of ethics vary between organizations and countries. Nonetheless there are clear basic principles which exist universally such as the basic principles mentioned above.

war is ideologic by nature, the complex question of objectivity and impartiality is a big concern in war reporting.

Critics state that by attempting to stay objective and neutral, war journalism is actually biased in favor of war. It is criticized as being violence oriented, propaganda oriented, elite oriented and victory oriented. This prompts readers “to over-value violent, reactive responses and undervalue non-violent, developmental responses”. (McGoldrick, 2006, p. 1). I also argue in this paper that war journalism is prone to be manipulated by ideological powers by distorting the interpretation of the journalism ethical principles. War journalism leads to a more ideologically polarized public which in turn leads to a decrease in global solidarity, resulting in the increasing threat to world peace.

4. The Perspective of Jürgen Habermas

4.1. The Modern Democratic Nation-state

Jürgen Habermas (born 1929) is a philosopher belonging to the Frankfurt School which focuses on social theories and critical philosophy. His moral objective of preventing further calamities such as the World War II and his deep concern for man’s freedom lead to his interest in democratic institutions and renewal in democratic politics (Finlayson, 2005, p.14). He believes that the modern nation-state is built on rational principles, the morality behind it is to resolve conflict and to maintain and renew social order. A healthy democratic institution should produce policies that are rational or justifiable, meaning that the laws and policies should be in tune with rational public opinion, that is, public opinion that is reached through rational discussion. This is desirable because when the citizens accept the rationale of laws and policies, they tend to abide more to it. Therefore, a rational society is also a more stable society. This is the moral and instrumental reasons why modern citizens prefer the democratic system.

The key to the existence of the modern democratic nation-state is the active participation of the public in using its rights as citizens. It is important that they not be motivated only by their respective self-interest but also by the common interest of the society. This means that the public motivation comes from the ethical culture of the society. This ethical culture spurs people to engage in public discussions about the issues they are facing. Hence the bond between members of the public is the sense of solidarity shared among them. Without solidarity, the modern constitutional nation-state cannot function as it is meant to be. (Untara & Ryadi, 2018, p. 1530).

Habermas states that plurality is unavoidable in the modern society. It means that there is a need to acknowledge the fact that the modern public consciousness and rationality involves various mindsets. In this situation, each individual needs to value the role and contribution of the others. This is done through discourse. In public discourse the universalization of norms is done in a social and interactive way through communication for the purpose to achieve consensus. (Untara & Ryadi, 2018, p. 1532). Discourse is done in the public sphere where

anyone can freely involve in communicative action and express their validity claims. Habermas envisions such a discursive modern society where solidaristic, dialogic, rational communication replaces the traditional one-way communication model. This is further explained in his theory of communicative action.

4.2. The Communicative Action and Validity Claims

Habermas differentiates between instrumental rationality and communicative rationality. Instrumental rationality aims at achieving a particular goal. It is monologic and individualistic (Magnis-Suseno, 2000, p.220). It also leads to instrumental action where one communicates not to discuss and achieve mutual understanding, but only to get other people to do or act as one wishes. It includes persuasion, incentive, manipulation and threat. That is why it is monologic and strategic in nature. This is not real communication. On the other hand, communicative rationality results in communicative action where the parties communicate to reach a common understanding with the goal to reach consensus, not to pursue their respective agenda. When a common understanding is achieved, the communication is rational. One enters the communicative action with an open mind, the end result of the discussion is open. Thus, communicative action is reflective and critical in nature (Magnis-Suseno, 2000, p.220-222).

To achieve consensus, it is necessary that the discourse follows the three validity basis of meaning namely a validity claim to truth, rightness and truthfulness/sincerity of the speaker's intention. Note that the term 'validity' here refers to the 'internal connection with reasons' that is the close relation between reasons and consensus. The validity claims are necessary because that is the goal of communication. To claim a validity means "a commitment to supply the appropriate reasons." (Finlayson, 2005, p.36)

In the validity claim to the truth, when one says that 'the earth is round', he believes it to be a fact and that there are good reasons to validate that the earth indeed has a round shape. On the other hand, the validity claim of rightness is connected to the moral norm of the society, hence it is an intersubjective validity claim. For example, the claim 'we must protect our environment' can be justified as a right claim by the moral norm of the modern society. The validity claim of truthfulness means that the speaker is sincere in his intention to communicate. This is important because lies and manipulations are not true communicative action; they are instead instrumental actions.

To make a meaningful utterance or to communicate is to make a validity claim, to undertake to adduce reasons that could be accepted by participants in a discourse prosecuted according to the above mentioned rules " (Finlayson, 2005, p.45) Any true utterance and any norm that is right is amenable to rationally motivated consensus, meaning that whatever that is claimed to be valid, right or true can necessarily gain the approval of the participants in a

discourse that is properly carried out. This necessary connection denotes a pragmatic implication, that is, the participants in general cannot avoid making this connection (Finlayson, 2005, p.46)

4.3. The Colonialization of the Lifeworld

According to Habermas, the lifeworld or *lebenswelt* is the informal or background domain of the daily ordinary life that comes from the subjective human experience such as family life, social and political life outside of organized institutions (Wessler, 2018, p.8). These are unregulated domains that provide a repository of shared meanings and understandings, as well as a social horizon for daily interaction with other people. The communicative action is enabled through this subjective social horizon from the lifeworld. The norms that we use when claiming or contesting moral rightness and the presuppositions about the objective world we rely on when we make truth claims comes from the lifeworld. Each time a successful communicative action happens, the consensus reached feeds back into the lifeworld and replenishes it. Lifeworld resists the fragmentation of meanings, thus preventing the eruption of conflicts. In this way lifeworld increases solidarity and functions as a shield against social disintegration (Finlayson, 2005, p.53)

On the other hand, systems are administrative power or social macro structures which do not depend on communicative actions to function, that is the political and economic system. Systems are necessary in our highly differentiated modern societies. Both systems are steered by steering media. The political system is steered by power incentives and the economic system is steered by monetary incentives. Their actions are strategic or instrumental in nature, because they are ruled by the instrumental rationality (Wessler, 2018, p.8).

The society is made up of the delicate equilibrium between lifeworld and systems that work in complementary ways. The acting subjects or the participants see society as the lifeworld of a social group, whereas the non-acting subjects of the uninvolved observers see society as “a system of actions such that each action has a functional significance according to its contribution to the maintenance of the system” (Wessler, 2018, p.8).

However, Habermas is concerned with the disturbances that systems cause to the lifeworld which he calls ‘the colonialization of lifeworld’ (Wessler, 2018, p.8). Systems come into existence from the lifeworld because system operates on the basis of resources of meaning derived from lifeworld. Lifeworld can ensure that the systems are rational and truly promote the common good. A rational society is created where the abundance of goods and control of the environment is produced by rational systems which operates on rational values such as truth, goodness, fairness, etc. However, system tends to encroach upon and even destroy the lifeworld by creating a series of complex and harmful historical and social processes. As the networks of instrumental actions from the systems becomes more complex and denser, they eventually intrude into lifeworld and replace its functions. Thus, the capitalist economy and

political administrative system overpower and even steer the public discourse towards their own agenda which does not always serve the best interest of the society. As lifeworld shrinks, social pathologies arise where the negative effects of markets and economical and political ideologies are seen also on the non-market, lifeworld domains they colonize. This results in the increased fragmentation of meanings (anomaly), disintegration of social bonds, social alienation or reduced sense of belonging, increase in sectoral ego, hence the increase in solidarity crisis that we are experiencing today (Wessler, 2018, p.8).

This problem of colonialization of lifeworld by the system can be solved through reflective and communicative public discourse which takes place in the public sphere. Therefore, it is imperative that cultural production and political will-formation be kept as free as possible from power and monetary influence. For this reason, Habermas disagrees with the commercialization of education, science, art and the media (Wessler, 2018, p.8). The commercialization of the media is a particularly grave concern because it is highly capable of corrupting the public discourse of political communication and free will-formation with biased political and economic agendas and strategies. Media commercialization results in the degradation of the public sphere because it cripples the critical thinking of the public. Control of the media by elites creates a passive, consumptive public which is detrimental to the democratic institutions.

5. Confusions in the Interpretation of Impartiality, Objectivity and Value-free

The era of digital globalization brings new changes to journalism. It is important to question who is now the public served by journalism? While it is true that its parochial public is the society where the news company exists, it should also take into account that its news reports are also being viewed by the global public. Therefore, it is necessary that journalism considers how its news reporting ethically impacts the global public. This is especially so in war reporting because war is an issue in which people feel strongly about, and it is a human affair which is ideologically charged by nature. Hence there is increasing urgency that today's journalism should serve the purpose of the global common good. In particular war journalism should first and foremost promote world peace since peace is the first basic condition that enables the world to live and thrive.

Seen from the perspective of Habermas, war journalism as an ethical profession and industry cannot steer away from moral values or norms (even under the pretext of impartiality) when it is actively engaged in its role of empowering the public. The public empowerment through the media is necessary in a democratic institution so that the public can engage in a more rational discourse on wars and their consequences. The values it should be serving are values which sustain the democratic institutions such as liberty, fraternity/solidarity, equality/justice. Thus, in line with the moral objective of Habermas, war journalism should be oriented towards world peace, global solidarity and conflict resolution. However, this should not be

seen as a contradiction with the principles of impartiality and objectivity as suggested by some journalists who think that those principles are the cause of the double standard in war journalism and therefore should sometimes be ignored in order to deliver quality reports. Instead, I argue that it is necessary that journalists adhere to those principles precisely so that they can make quality reports on wars. Journalism needs those principles in order to deliver peace-oriented war reporting. I argue that the problem lies in the misinterpretation of those ethical principles.

As explained earlier, journalism has ethical purpose, meaning that it is not value free. The journalism principles of truth, impartiality, and objectivity/independence should not be confused as being value free. The case of BBC not mentioning the truth about Israeli shelling of Lebanon residential areas for the sake of impartiality, is a case of confusing impartiality and objectivity with being value free. Then how should impartiality and objectivity be interpreted? What does it mean for war journalism to be neutral and independent in presenting facts while at the same time being oriented towards human rights and solidarity? Does being human rights-oriented mean being partial and losing journalism independence as seems to be suggested by BBC in its past coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian war?

Journalism in essence should be human rights oriented, and it can only do so by being impartial, objective and independent. War journalists should report cases of human rights violations in the warzone no matter who are the perpetrators and who are the victims. Thus, an interpretation of impartiality does not sacrifice the principle of truth. It is an ethically objective journalism because it does not pretend to be value free. A common logical error is: If BBC uses emotive words to report on the actual suffering of the Palestinians in Israeli's indiscriminate shelling in Gaza, it means that BBC is losing its neutrality. This is a logical error because it is possible for BBC to be reporting the devastation that results from the Israeli's violation of human rights while being politically neutral at the same time.

Another confusion is regarding the principle of objectivity, that is, presenting facts without injecting the journalist's own opinion. A common belief is that using emotional words to describe the catastrophic situation in the warzone means the journalist is injecting his/her own opinion. I call this an error because it is precisely the use of emotional words that allows journalist to portray accurately the desperation and intensity of sufferings at the warzone. The truth is that the Palestinians suffered greatly, therefore in order to be objective, he should be presenting this fact to the audience, meaning that it is unavoidable to use some emotional words to accurately portray human sufferings at war. Failing to do so means that the journalist is not being ethically objective according to the true ethical purpose of journalism. Also, using emotional words should not be easily equated as 'being subjective or injecting own opinion, emotion and belief'. A truthful/sincere journalist uses emotional words to describe the people's conditions, and not his own opinion and feelings. Therefore, a news report that features the immense suffering of the Palestinian children in Gaza using emotional words is in fact being objective and truthful. It is in line with the Habermasian validity claim of truth. (Magnis-Suseno, 2000, p.221-222). This

is how the principle of objectivity should be interpreted should journalism be true to its ethical essence and values. Failing to do so means failing the underlying democratic values for which journalism exists as a profession and as an industry. Thus, it becomes clear that ethical, quality journalism cannot function without proper interpretation and strong adherence to the principles of impartiality, objectivity and independence.

6. The Double Standard in War Reporting as Instrumental Action and as Colonialization of The Lifeworld

It is evident that double standard in war journalism exists. This is because journalism which is supposed to be politically impartial has in fact become a heavy player in the fields of politics. After journalism has become a giant industry, it must take into account the formidable political and economic forces that is supporting it. Thus, journalism has forgotten its true purpose—to empower the public. By doing so, it can be argued that the contemporary journalism has “betrayed” loyalty to its client—the public. It is no wonder that there is an increasing global distrust towards the media by the public (Schudson, 1999).

According to the Habermasian perspective, the practice of double standard in war journalism hurts global solidarity because the validity claim for truthfulness/sincerity of the journalist and the media company becomes dubious. This double standard is an instrumental action led by instrumental rationality. The media already has close-ended purpose when communicating the war to the public, that is to persuade the public to subscribe to a certain image of the war that it is portraying. For example, to see Israel as a lesser evil than Russia when it comes to their treatment towards the enemy state civilians. Hence the war coverage is infused with ideological propaganda. This distorts the public rationality. It makes public discussion on the war becomes irrational such as seen in Indonesia these days. Many Indonesians are thinking along the line of “the enemy of my enemy is my ally”. The strong anti-America sentiment in Indonesia means that Russia—the enemy of America—is an ally, thus Russia’s side of the war must be supported. The danger with this faulty reasoning is that they become anti-critical of the many human rights violations done by Russia. They become indifferent towards the sufferings of the millions of Ukrainian citizens, dismissing it as normal consequences of war. I call this an irrational public opinion because the underlying basis for this line of thought is merely ideological sentiment which cannot be rationally justified with any moral norm of the Indonesian society. In fact, this ideological polarization is causing many Indonesians to impose their own double standard in wars. On the one hand, they think of the Ukrainians sufferings as justifiable, but on the other hand, they see the sufferings of Myanmar citizens as unjustifiable. Maybe what is worse is that few people are questioning whether the Indonesian public are discussing on wars rationally or irrationally. Such irrational public opinion fails the validity claim of rightness according to Habermas. This weakens the role of public discussion as communicative action. Instead, the ideological polarization of wars in Indonesia easily becomes a propaganda tool used

by the fundamentalists to make their followers even more ideologically charged and empathize less on injustices suffered by their ideological enemies.

This is a manifestation of the colonialization of the lifeworld as concerned by Habermas. This the case of media commercialization where there is deliberate manipulation of political-economical system towards the lifeworld done by the media. In this the case, the media can no longer remain neutral because the journalists and editors have submitted themselves to those who are truly in control of the media industry namely the powerful political and economic elites. The ideological framing of wars by the media in absorbed into the public's lifeworld and slowly changing the repository of shared meanings and understandings as well as its moral norms. This ideological framing results in the fragmentation of meanings between members of the public (anomaly), increased sectoral ego and disintegration of social bond. The democratic public which is supposed to be able to discuss issues rationally and amicably in order to reach consensus is now losing the very spirit that enables it to do so as the spirit of fraternity, equality and liberty is eroded by the ideological framing of the media. Thus, we see the long-term impact of the double standard in war journalism; it colonializes the lifeworld, thus increasing the global solidarity crisis and tension between global societies. The result is a world where peace becomes increasingly fragile.

7. Conclusion

War journalism is prone to increasing the global solidarity crisis through ideology polarization caused by the double standard where different wars are reported using different interpretations of the principles of objectivity and impartiality, resulting in biased reports which downplays the military aggression of a political ally and magnifies (sometimes distorts) facts about the political enemy.

War journalism is prone to such manipulation of ethical principles because it confuses what it means to be impartial and objective to being value-free. Habermas reminds us that journalism in a democratic society exists as an ethical profession to empower people by giving them reliable and updated information of events according to the underlying moral values of a democratic institution. Thus, war reporting should have a clear stance towards human rights and solidarity by reporting cases of injustice in the frontline. The ethical purpose of journalism should serve as an anchor in defining what it means to be objective and impartial.

War journalism that takes sides with public empowerment and the common good should strive to (1) report real facts of war and avoid misleading terms. Invasion should be presented as invasion and indiscriminate shelling should be reported as such. Also the use of emotional words should be allowed to describe the actual sufferings in the warzone with greater accuracy; and also (2) this should be done regardless of the political affiliation and interest of the media company, meaning that journalism should dare to report a wrongdoing of a political ally as it

does to a political enemy. This is how the journalism principles of objectivity and impartiality should be interpreted. Journalism objectivity should be different from scientific objectivity which puts aside considerations of moral values.

The double standard in war journalism is a case of the colonialization of the lifeworld according to Habermas theory. This is caused by the commercialization of the media. There is deliberate manipulation of the political-economical system towards the lifeworld of the public done through the media. The ideological framing of wars by the media is absorbed into the public's lifeworld and slowly changes the repository of shared meanings and understandings as well as its moral norms. It is an instrumental action which is not oriented towards building a consensus and resolving conflicts. This results in the fragmentation of meanings between members of the public (anomaly), increased sectoral ego and disintegration of social bond. The democratic public is now losing the very spirit that enables it to engage in rational discourse as it is eroded by the ideological framing of the media, in this case, through the double standard in war reporting.

An example is the common public reaction in Indonesia towards the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Many people stand in favor of Russia's invasion and becomes less critical of the violation of human rights suffered by the Ukrainians mainly through sentimental reasoning of "the enemy of my enemy is my ally". Such public opinion is irrational because it fails the validity claim of rightness according to Habermas. This weakens the role of public discussions as rational communicative actions. Instead, the ideological polarization of wars in Indonesia easily becomes a propaganda tool used by the fundamentalists to radicalize their followers and make them empathize less on the injustices suffered by their ideological enemies. People becomes less critical of the party they are supporting; hence they tend to become blind followers who easily dismiss the human rights violations committed by 'their ally' in the war. This causes a cold indifference towards the sufferings of the civilians in the warzone. Invasions and aggressions are readily justified. World peace is becoming a lesser priority in an increasingly ideologically polarized global society.

There needs to be a radical shift in the journalism industry by reevaluating its ethical purpose, core values and how journalism impartiality and objectivity should be interpreted in order to best empower the democratic public towards a more rational discourse.

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