

THE ROLE OF PRESS TV CHANNEL AND ITS MEDIA FUNCTIONS IN REFLECTING POLITICAL EVENTS IN IRAN

Samanealsadat Hashemipour¹, Afsaneh Mozaffari,*²

1-Department of Social Communication Sciences, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

2-.Associate Professor, Department of Social Communication Sciences, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

* Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

This study was to analyze the content of the news reported in network Press TV. It studied the reflection of political events in this network. The research was performed for highlighting and emphasizing the political functions of the media and political communication using content analysis. The choice of network news, news related to political events that represent the policy of the media network, is taken into consideration. The study samples included news about the political events in Press TV network. In this study, 141 reports were selected for content analysis in terms of indicators such as induced bias or impartiality, the value of news, news items, and other news sources were evaluated. According to the results, most of the news, with only one-sided and agreeing point of view in covering news related to Iran, reflected in a few cases. The viewpoints were one-sided in favor, and opposite views were covered too. Merely the reflection of the agreeing views will manifest the orientation of the news and shows the network as biased. Thus, it is suggested to avoid declining opposite views and to cover them in a professional way. This will not only make audience rely more on the news, but also will help the reports to be more effective and thus, it will be easier for the audience to accept the main theme of the network.

KEYWORDS: news coverage, political events in Iran, Press TV, induction of impartiality, news elements and values, political communication

INTRODUCTION

A review and analysis of the news media picturing an event in different forms such as news, images, news reports, expert talks, etc. is in fact, a reverse engineering of the imagination of those events in the general media studies to evaluate the news policies of a medium toward an event. News is essentially new information or current events. The word "news" comes from the plural of the word "new" (Reporters' Handbook). Some statements are newsworthy to picture in journals, websites or TV channels. For instance, when a dog bites a man, that is not news....But if a man bites a dog, that is news (Bogart, 1845-1921). To write successful news stories, four requisites are necessary: the power to estimate news values properly, the stories to write, the ability to work rapidly, and the power to present facts accurately and interestingly (Spencer). The radio newscast must be consumed sequentially; that is, the listener does not hear the second story in the newscast without hearing the first story. However, Television news style is much like radio news style, for a viewer can no more return to a group of facts than a listener can (University of Minnesota).

Governmental channel's news is seen as more credible compared to private channel's news (Wallberg).

In any form of picturing the news, News media have the responsibility to accurately represent the world in order for society to make the right social and political judgements (Transnational Analysis of Television News). Accuracy is also more than just getting the facts right – it is getting the right facts, and backing up interpretation of the facts with authoritative and unimpeachable sourcing (A handbook of Reuters journalism). Thus, the media plays an important role as a mass communication channel in the society, through which, news stories exert powerful influence on the construction of social norms and values. Journalism is a discipline of collecting, analyzing, verifying, and presenting news regarding current events, trends, issues and people (PRINT MEDIA & PHOTO JOURNALISM). Even though journalists rely heavily on human sources for information and quotes, the proof of what is claimed is usually found in physical sources (Burns, 2002). If newspaper stories were consumed sequentially as they are in radio and television newscasts, the writing style would change of necessity (Fang, 1991). Understanding the features and characteristics of PRESS TV news channel help to better understand the orientation and direction of the network. In this study, we plan to obtain characteristics and properties of spread news about political events, to be attained such knowledge, knowledge that in the future for a lot of conducted analysis and planning would be useful to provide practical solutions for this

network. In this study, PRESS TV network was selected as Islamic Republic of Iran's international network. As this network is an international network with a broad range of audience, especially in the Middle East, it was measured and analyzed in this study. There are various methods for evaluating, analyzing the media, among which, content analysis is of the most importance.

Research questions:

The most important questions raised in this study were as follows:

1. What is the role of Press TV Network in reflection of political events in the international arena?
2. How does the Press TV Network cover political news in TV journalism?

Highlighting the political events:

Heavy reliance of the modern audience on the media news indicates that societies today cannot continue their normal life without the media (Mozaffari, 2010, 121).

Media also put news issues in their agenda according to their priorities. In general, highlighting means that the media affect public perception of the importance of the issues and by setting priorities, they identify the priorities of the public. (Mohammadi Mehr, 2009, 53)

Walter Lippman described the process of highlighting as a step in which puts a subject of news into the attention of the public and the political elite through mass media. (Rogers, 2009, 445)

It appears highlighting in the mass media affects the public, political and media highlighting.

Media highlighting → General highlighting → political highlight

Model 1: The process of highlighting

As noted, highlighting process pattern is composed of three main parts:

1. Media priorities that affect the public's priorities.
2. The general priorities that may affect medium priority.
3. Policy Priorities

Political functions of the media and political communication:

The need for information is one of the basic needs of social life. (Mozaffari, 2010, 118)

Mass media as a subset in the social system have certain functions. Appropriate function of the media demands active accordance with the facts in the societal sets to lead to the desired goals (Nazari, 2009).

Concerning the political and information roles of the media, following issues can be noted:

- The media plays an important role in forming public opinion, because they build a relationship between people and the political leaders and economic experts.
- Through the media, public opinion is influenced by advertising and in some cases, some thoughts of a predetermined format emerge, which are always and continually of the focus of political parties.
- The media can inform the politicians of the public thoughts in a country.
- The media play an important role in creating new values and this depends on the social, political and national circumstances. (Nazari, 2009, 64)

Objectivity and impartiality in news:

Objectivism and impartiality are as a means to achieve democratic life and universal natural rights. Media activists, judges, foreign peacekeepers and mediators benefit from independent practice as a tool to advance the goals (and values) i.e. justice, peace and fair play. They provide fair assessments and they reach conclusions. It should not be assumed that the international referee and the media are completely neutral and value-free. It should not also be assumed they ought to be neutral or value-free. (Schudson, 1978, 130).

According to Ward, the news report would have a "pragmatic objectivism" only when it has been tested on three criteria: experimental criteria, integration criteria and standards intellectual debate criteria. (Parker, 2003, 3)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method used in this research is content analysis. The period of the study is close to major political events such as elections events, ie the last three months of the Iranian year 1390. The study territory is Tehran, Iran. Research method is content analysis and the techniques are issue evaluation.

The population and sample size:

The population in this research is the political and electional news in PRESS TV withinin the period mentioned. The sample size in this study included all the available electional news, and sampling was not conducted due to the limit in population size.

Analysis Unit:

The unit of analysis in this research is the news. News of the ninth parliamentary elections or the eleventh presidential elections in Iran, in the news section of PRESS TV.

RESULTS

Table 1: orientation in the news reflection

Orientation	Frequency	Percent
Positive	101	72
Neutral	34	24
Negative	6	4
Sum	141	100

As shown in table 1, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, 72% of the news had positive orientation, and 24% were neutral and 4% of the titles had negative orientation.

Table 2: The newsworthy of highlighted news

Newsworthy	Frequency	Percent
Novelty	52	37
Inclusion	56	40
Frequency & size	6	4
Fame	14	10
Collision	12	9
Proximity	1	9
Oddness	0	0
Total	141	100

As shown in table 2, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, 40% of the news had inclusion newsworthy, 37% had novelty newsworthy and 10% of the news had fame newsworthy.

Table 3: Highlighted news elements

News elements	Frequency	Percent
When	40	28
Who	30	21
Where	28	20
How	1	1
Why	7	5
Total	141	100

As shown in table 3, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, 28% of the news dealt with the news element of “When”, 25% of the news dealt with the news element of “What” and 21% of of the news dealt with the news element of “Whom”.

Table 4: Coordination of news and images

Coordination of news and images	Frequency	Percent
Poor coordination	17	12
Good coordination	124	88
Total	141	100

Table 4 showed that, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, 88% of the news had good coordination between news and images and 12% of the news had poor coordination between news and images.

Table 5: The use of news source

Source	Frequency	Percent
Without mentioning the source	54	38
Quoting from officials or internal official organizations	47	33
Quoting from the journalists of the channel itself	13	9
Quoting from individuals or internal non-official organizations	27	19
Total	141	100

Table 5 indicated that, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, the source of 38% of the news was not introduced and 19% of the news was narrated from un-reliable sources. In general, 57% of the news was not successful in introducing the news sources.

Table 6. Linguistic signs suggestive of bias in the news

Source	Frequency	Percent
Linguistic signs suggestive of bias in the news with direct quotation	14	10
Linguistic signs suggestive of bias in the news with indirect quotation	14	10
Linguistic signs suggestive of bias in the news without quotation	62	44
Not using linguistic signs	51	36
Total	141	100

Table 6 indicated that, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, 44% of the news linguistic signs suggestive of bias were used without quotation.

Table 7. Reflections in the news

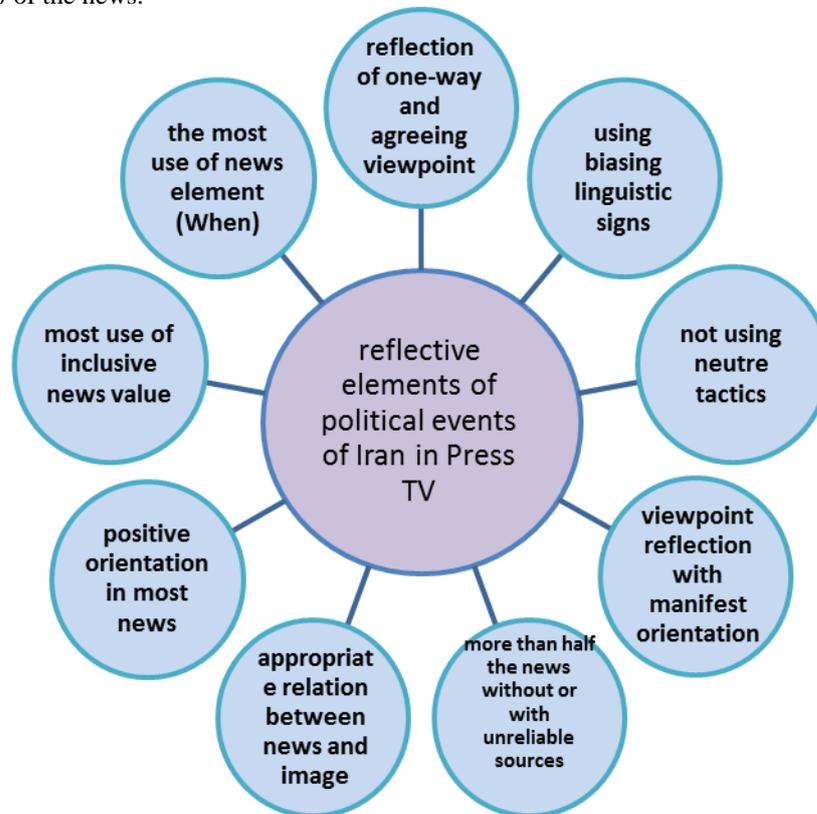
Source	Frequency	Percent
One-way (agreeing) reflection	112	79
Two-way (agreeing & disagreeing) reflection	29	21
Total	141	100

Table 7 indicated that, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, in 79% of the news, one-way (agreeing) perspective was reflected in covering electoral news in Iran. The remaining 21% covered two-way (agreeing & disagreeing) reflection.

Table 8. Reflection of viewpoints in news, interviews or reports

Source	Frequency	Percent
Manifest bias	90	64
Hidden bias	51	36
Total	141	100

Table 8 indicated that, in News sections of PRESS TV, from among the total of the news analyzed, there was manifest bias orientation in 64% of the news.



Descriptive model of news coverage review in political and electional events of Iran in Press TV

Figure 1 shows the reflective elements of political events of Iran in Press TV.

Figure 1. Reflective elements of political events of Iran in Press TV

CONCLUSION

Based on research findings, and by reviewing the results considering policies of news coverage of PRESS TV channel in terms of political and electional events in Iran, following results could be concluded:

1. In terms of orientation of the channel, it can be mentioned that most the news in this channel are with positive orientation, which of course, are in favor of the mentioned channel. Also, the neuter news which is left for the audience to judge are placed in the second place after the news with positive orientation.
2. In terms of highlight the values in election news, news values of "including" had the highest amount importance. This was because most news offered in this section was allocated to general issues of election and contribution of people including all members of the society. Newsworthy of "freshness" of the news was the second value which was considered highest in most news coverage when trying to show the channel's effort to inform in time.
3. Also, in highlighting the elements of news, the news of "when" had the maximum amount that could be allocated to the newly newsworthy and timely notification network with political events.
4. One of the most important components of the TV news is the image, and in fact, it is the complementary and verifying the text. Thus, the agreement and coordination between the text and images are of the most important news

which needs a special attention from the media. Most network news related to covering political and electoral events in Iran, with good coordination between the pictures and the news, makes the news more objective and more realistic to appear. It is necessary of course, limited cases in news and image discrepancy to be resolved.

5. In terms of studied network news, in most cases, the source of news was not mentioned or was quoted from invalid sources. Considering that one of the indicators of "neutrality induction" is mentioning the authoritative source, it was better for the network to mention the news source.

6. In most cases, for political and election news coverage in Iran, the "linguistic signs of the evidence of bias" were used without the quotes. Application of value attributes without direct quotes, is considered as posing in the media and is in violation with "neutrality induction".

7. In most news, only one-sided perspective in favor of the election of the country is reflected, and in a few cases, beside the one-sided agreeing perspective, opposite views and opinions were also covered.

8. In most cases of the reflection of the views in news or interviews and reports, there was a clear bias, in violation of "neutrality induction". In general, facing with criticism or opposing views, news management is negligible to eliminate obvious bias.

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