

Vihren Bouzov¹

Full Professor

St. Cyril and St. Methodius

University of Veliko Trnovo

GLOBAL CORPORATE MEDIA – A TOOL FOR DIGITAL TOTALITARIANISM

Abstract: *In this paper, I will seek for an explanation with the thesis that the media have become an instrument of digital totalitarianism and, through the manipulation of consciousness and behavior, they seek to lead to the imposition of a form of impersonal power over humanity. People have always known that the media lie and spin dramatic news to increase their profits. But that is not the case now. This type of vile politics has had different dimensions over the years. Global corporate media and social networks have become a tool for imposing a new totalitarianism through digital means. It should be noted that this totalitarianism is different from the forms it was known in the 20th century. There is no unity of the people around the leader. The government is carried out by proxy figures who serve a chain of faceless institutions. The job of the corporate media is to create an acceptable image of the false government, to embellish it with familiar values, and to silence opposition voices.*

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In the last two or three decades, in developed democratic countries, faith in the media as a pillar of

¹ vbouzov@gmail.com; ORCID: 0000-0001-9721-9006

democracy and the Fourth Estate, whose mission is to protect the interests of citizens, has evaporated relatively quickly and imperceptibly. In previous periods, the intellectuals, people of science and culture, could express their critical opinions through the media, but today this is no longer possible. The media has ceased to be an instrument of freedom. It seems that the time for independent journalism is long gone. And big personalities can afford to speak their minds if they have strong political support behind them, like Tucker Carlson. The old media – newspapers, television, radio – have today been replaced by electronic means and social networks. They give the illusion of personal communication and enter people's homes and minds much more easily. They can be more easily controlled and this is done in the interest of the global masters. Freedom has been lost with the total control over every opinion and post on the Internet, especially its use to suggest certain political and economic behavior.

How can this be explained? In this paper, I will seek for an explanation with the thesis that the media have become an instrument of digital totalitarianism and, through the manipulation of consciousness and behavior, they seek to lead to the imposition of a form of impersonal power over humanity. People have always known that the media lie and spin dramatic news to increase their profits. But that is not the case now. This type of vile politics has had different dimensions over the years. Global corporate media and social networks have become a tool for imposing a new totalitarianism through digital means.

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As I see it, the role of mass media information in the process of globalization in the world today is somehow paradoxical. New information and communication technologies have made it possible to attain a new dynamic type of political, social and cultural integration of mankind as a “global village” (McLuhan 1962); in which space and time lose their importance in the sphere of communication. At the same time, the so-called neoliberal globalization, based on the existence of world financial markets and the power of transnational corporations, leads the appearance of a worldwide hegemony of commercial corporative media. They maintain world rule through propaganda and pushing projects that quickly and efficiently multiply corporate profits.

They become “instituted” as economic structures, striving for occupation of markets by all possible means. They have evolved an “ideological justification” of the global expansion of capitalism in the sphere of values, human relations and lifestyle. (Artz 2003) One could rightfully say that the latter has an impact on “the Global Empire” as a “paradigmatic form of biopower”; thus – it “creates the very world it inhabits” and “seeks directly to rule over human nature” (Hardt & Negri 2001: xv). Through their symbolic power, they successfully dominate over every sphere of existence of a society: politics, economic life, social ties, national culture, human communication and private life. Their products are symbols and ideas put out by cultural and media industries, false values and “cloned” images. They create a new reality in which people live a fictitious life.

The reasons we can use to explain why corporate media serve the establishment of digital totalitarianism are also changing. The explanation that journalists are people who, out of ideological convictions and a desire for power, serve authoritarian causes does not give even a fraction of the true picture. In my previous publications, I have shown that there are epistemological and psychological reasons why those working in corporate media cannot understand and describe the world as it is (Bouzov 2023). They strive to build a false world in order to overturn and modify the minds and beliefs of their readers, to support the power of those who pay them. They want to impose dominant themes and interpretations that will penetrate people's minds and make them believe in them as "natural interpretations."

This was also reported by Paul Feyerabend, who, criticizing Francis Bacon's ambition to remove and clear all "idols" that hinder knowledge, noted that "eliminate all natural interpretations, and you also eliminate the ability to think and to perceive". These interpretations could be considered as a priori presuppositions of science in the context of Kantian ideas or as prejudices, which could be removed before any serious examination has begun. (Feyerabend 1993: 58) They are subject to verification and rejection through critical discussion. They are ideas so closely connected with observations that special efforts are needed to establish their existence and content; they cannot be subjected to verification and corrections. They are transmitted by media images and stories to the public like a contagious disease. Journalists perceive the world through their natural interpretations. They limit their perception of the world by reducing it to individualistic preconceptions.

The first project that the media persistently promotes is the normalization of war. It is no longer an event of the past, but something imminent that will affect everyone. The military industry needs a constant threat, and therefore constant tension must be built up. The best candidates for this are countries that refuse to submit to the New World Order. In the 1990s, this was Yugoslavia, and Russia and China are permanent players in this scenario. We people from the Balkans and Eastern Europe will always be seen as second-class, as aggressive poor men (McCain 1999), and as a suitable tool for military campaigns against Russia.

The global capitalism has always tried to resolve permanent crises through wars. They quickly restore and multiply the lost profits. The introduction of artificial intelligence and digital innovations into military technology provides many more opportunities for this. Today, however, the technologies of war are such that the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992) may turn out to be not a victory for "liberal" democracy, but the end of humanity. The European Union, which was created to reject war and create good conditions for its citizens, is now being asked to rebuild its economy on military rails. Politicians who speak out against militarization and military support for Ukraine, leading to many deaths, are declared traitors working for the enemy. The peoples of Eastern Europe must prepare to defend world democracy at all costs. All opposing voices are silenced and demonized. And there will always be someone who will fight for money in the name of other people's interests.

As a result of the escalation, sanctions and the rattling of weapons, a large number of enterprises in traditional industries in France and Germany are going bankrupt or

moving their production to the United States. These processes are the opposite of the previous ones from the heyday of globalization.

The media presentation of military conflicts is dominated by the division into good and bad sides. The former may carry out aggression to protect their security and interests, such as Israel, the latter are condemned for everything. They are attributed with plans for genocide, chemical attacks, anti-human projects. Entire film studios fabricate fake news from the fronts and push them to serious media. An example of the former is Israel, for the latter - Russia, Syria, Iran and Serbia.

Our interest in the global hegemony of corporative media relates to the possibility to use them as an instrument of promoting the culture of peace. But it is opposed to their nature and basic orientation. It is true that the values of solidarity, mutual aid, tolerance and cooperation do not lead to the development of easily marketed products. They cannot be coached to the neoliberal vision of the world. The latter is only limited to the notion of „state of nature”: strong and economically active people alone could survive in such conditions. As a whole, mass media champion easily digestible individualistic values. It is their mission to downgrade genuine social values by means of starting out from the principle of dissociation (Perelman): war is presented as peace, aggression – as humanitarian assistance and robbery - as dignity. Corporative media propaganda has a telling effect on social attitudes; it is an incontestable fact that social commitments have disappeared in our society, as evinced also by results of the latest European Survey of Values valid for Bulgarians (Bouzov 2009).

In the light of the above said, an interpretation of political and war conflicts can prove to be one-sided. The

number of such conflicts increased after the end of the Cold War. They have now turned into one of the foremost problems of the development of an effective system of global security. Media presentations of such conflicts usually single out the „rightfulness” of the stand of the „Great Forces” – i.e. of Global West, identifying itself with the international community as a whole and with the universal values of democracy, saying that it always has a natural intuition to identify and defend „victims” in a conflict. In the light of the much-vaunted triumph of democratic values all over the world, it is not clear why such conflicts are not minimized! On the contrary, they have marked a growth in number and severity. Invariably, „the other side” is a source of all possible violations of freedom and terrible „global crimes”, such as nationalism, chauvinism, terrorism, ethnic cleansing and corruption. Peace must be imposed by means of the use of force. This „black and white scheme” has been kept viable in respect of the Balkan conflicts, ever since the nineties of the 20th century and up to the present day. Media have cropped up in the Balkan countries with activities overtly orientated to the erosion of national boundaries and values, in the wake of propaganda work favoring neoliberal universalism as a substitute.

The global corporate media has become the main tool of all authoritarian practices in the developed Western countries, especially the curtailment of human rights in crises. The second topic that the media instills appropriate interpretations about is crisis response. These are usually used to strengthen the power of global organizations such as the WHO. It turned out that the closure of small and medium-sized businesses, gatherings of people for social communication, churches

and sports competitions, could quickly become a model of a future totalitarian society. It was no coincidence that during the pandemic there was propaganda for social distancing, not physical distancing, which is normal during illness. When people gather, they can share critical thoughts. If they do not have green passports and are forced to stay at home, they cannot agree on joint protest actions.

We can recall the gigantic experiment initiated with the Covid restrictions. The crises of the pandemic and the ecological crisis are key to understanding the contemporary development of the world, problems such as the fate of nation-states, the prospects for overcoming global inequalities and health security. They are among the dominant ones in security sciences and political science. For a long time, the thesis that nation-states are the only protection of citizens against the arbitrariness of global corporations was gaining ground, but today we can consider the conflict between them to be over in favor of the latter. They seized nation-states and used them against citizens to establish a new authoritarian order on humanity subordinated through fear. As if with a snap of the fingers of the global masters at the Davos meeting, freedom of movement, democracy and a number of constitutional rights disappeared, normal things in our lives such as restaurants, vacations, hair salons, schools and universities were closed, and education was transferred online (Bouzov 2021).

In their book (Schwab & Maleret 2020), which could be seen as a propaganda manifesto, Schwab and his co-author outline the contours of a world in which capitalism gets a new start, or “reboot,” by rejecting neoliberal models of profit at all costs and striving for economic growth. Small and medium-sized businesses as the basis of capitalist progress are a thing of the past. Global

corporations, with their cooperation and policies of social responsibility towards their workers and customers, will gradually displace nation states and nationalism, and will become the backbone of global governance. It is natural that they must also take on the functions of exercising force and coercion on other people – through media manipulation and the application of “hard” methods. Everyone will be guaranteed a basic income from their earnings, and people’s lives must be digitized – from eating and shopping, through work to education and entertainment. Communication with others will remain on social networks to be controlled. In this way, by imposing a digital lid on the entire society, the contradiction between the 1% of decision-makers and all the rest, who are beginning to disagree with them and are ready for social protests to take their opinion into account, will be resolved. The goal is a global government as an instrument of corporate power, not as the basis of some global democracy, because the latter is disappearing as ineffective along with the old capitalism. Democracy of the old “pre-restart” type will be replaced by the decisions of highly paid experts serving the elite, not only in the field of medicine. The Swiss globalist and the French futurologist dream of a world in which small and medium-sized businesses are removed from the economy because they are the social base of populism and nationalism, and all activities are carried out through digital means. Financial and banking capital will have a monopoly on funds, including those in the coffers of nation states. Lockdowns can do this “work” – crush mass entrepreneurship, education, culture, sports, religion (because the Davos “old men” are all Freemasons). Measures against the pandemic inevitably

accelerate the digitalization of “everything” (Schwab, 2020: 62-64). The “Industry 4.0” society will change everything beyond recognition and there will be no need for so many workers and employees – people become unnecessary. Mobile shopping, working “from home”, online learning, “telephone” medicine creates the illusion among global capitalists that they will be able to get rid of a large part of their workers, schools can easily have only one subject teacher for the entire country, and office workers can be completely laid off. By 2035, $\frac{3}{4}$ of jobs in restaurants, entertainment, and trade should be robotized. And the "old" billionaires of the World Economic Forum will be able to turn into superhuman beings with the help of medicine. (Shwab 2020) The project to storm the "green" economy through the "green deal" in the EU and Biden's plans to support the "Kyoto process", which also rely on digitalization, also fits into the "space of opportunity" created by the pandemic (Schwab).

My thesis is that the global Covid-19 virus can be seen as a symbol of the terrifying consequences of neoliberal globalization for the world and for all people, of the collapse of the myth of nation-states as defenders of the interests of their citizens and a categorical symptom of the complete catastrophe of medicine in the capitalist West and of all medical systems that follow this model of profits from people's health and lives. We live in the most insecure of all possible worlds, in which the average citizen can rely neither on the state, nor on the media, which fan rather than extinguish fires, nor on medical experts, nor even on his closest community, with whom he is advised not to communicate.

Traditional media could not be a factor in the promotion and development of culture of peace, simply

because they are proponents of corporative economic and political interests and are an instrument of realization of the Empire's global hegemony. However, there exist certain sources of real resistance to its global hegemony - the global civil society itself, as an association of free citizens and their organizations created by means of communication in networks and common action against neoliberal domination and abuse of power. The Internet offers the possibility for frank and free communication among people. The global communication network is an environment of „communicative action” (as J. Habermas puts it), leading people to consensus in their assessment of socially-important values. Unfortunately, communication on global networks is subject to strict censorship. Fact-checkers delete all opinions and information that contradict the officially accepted ones.

The media stopped scaring us with global terrorism or forced migration, and turned to our health. And indeed - an attack can affect much fewer people than a virus transmitted by airborne droplets. The media saw themselves completely untied at the huge stand for the distribution of fear and panic. Lies and fake news reached such proportions that humanity imperceptibly returned to the time of the discovery of microbes almost two centuries ago, when English gentlemen were afraid to get on their horses without masks, so as not to be infected by invisible creatures. Back then, people were just discovering that man was condemned to live with countless viruses and bacteria, but now the manipulative factories of global and local media have tried to create primal fear.

They serve certain economic and political elites who do not like democracy (Klaus Schwab and the Davos forum) and try to impose corporate models of power. The

way to this is through total manipulation of consciousness and silencing of protesting voices. Digital authoritarianism is their ideal, because with it every person can be tracked most easily, and their rights are limited. The global media serves the structures of the "deep state" and does not recognize any democratic citizen control. Honest journalists are isolated and persecuted.

For centuries, people have dreamed of having their abilities enhanced by machines. Digital Leviathan is a dreamed society where humans have been replaced by machines in all their activities. Instead of humans, an artificial intelligence thinks and chooses who will rule politics. The requests of ordinary people are answered by dispassionate machines. Services in commerce have been completely replaced by digital means. Ordinary people are admitted to universities only to be prepared to be employees of global corporations run by machines.

Humans have been decimated by wars, epidemics, and conflicts, preserving our planet clean for the richest people and their families. They don't have to pay salaries to the robots because they've already paid the engineers who created them.

The small and middle classes are destroyed, as Klaus Schwab dreamed, because they were attached to the old democracy and were an obstacle to the digital Leviathan. The economy is entirely in the virtual sphere; material production is limited. People survive on the basic social income provided by corporations, without the right to leave their closed "smart" cities. Everyone is followed and it is known where they are and what they are thinking. Mandatory vaccinations restrict movement. Only the wealthy class is mobile. Birth control aligns

with the carbon neutrality of families. No one imagined that the order built in recent centuries by European civilization and the West was so fragile that it would melt away as if by a secret signal without a single shot being fired. There was talk of entering a new world war of a hybrid nature.

Are we really moving towards building such a society? Let's remember the restrictions with the Covid-pandemic! In the present-day world the global corporate media has imposed censorship and manipulation on basic issues of humanity - global wars and conflicts, health policies and crises, disasters. These media became the main propagators of ecological panic and tried to silence all critical voices. War news is now produced by fake organizations and TV companies.

It is time to end the global environmental panic, created to justify the redirection of business to ecological tracks and new, untold profits. Today, we are witnessing a distortion of the foundations of normal life by propaganda, which relies on dubious data and tries to impose severe restrictions on economic and human development. The mechanism is known to us since the time of the global pandemic. We must say that corporate business has been preparing for a long time for the great transformation of the economy from relying on natural, but limited and expensive, resources such as oil and gas to ecological production, from which countless riches are expected. In the 1960s, a group of politicians, scientists, economists created the Club of Rome, which in a 1972 report called "The Limits to Growth" (Meadows 1972), based on computer simulation, developed the ideological thesis that human productive activity threatens nature and depletes limited natural resources. They find the exponential growth of the population with a limited resource. The forecast is that by 2013 the resources of a

number of precious metals and oil will be exhausted. In fact, it is a modernized version of Malthusianism, but based on some objective facts and aimed at seeking direct economic benefits by pushing policies in the interest of rich countries. The conservative approach in ecology is distinguished from the indiscriminate invasion of commodity-money relations through the sale of air pollution allowances, because it unnecessarily burdens taxpayers, brings profits to shady structures and leads to the limitation of opportunities for the development of national industry.

We can summarize that the efforts of the global media to impose a new agenda on humanity and to establish the shadowy power of the global masters through technological utopias and manipulations must be rejected by means of critical thinking and social protests. The new digital totalitarianism is unfeasible from an economic point of view and unacceptable because it violates human rights.

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