Abstract

In the age of globalization, nation states have to negotiate with the neo-liberal world order, articulating national interest on the one hand and preserving national identity and sovereignty on the other. National media draw a world map for ordinary people and explain the relationship between globalization and their lives. Therefore one important way of examining the international discursive contestation is to look through national media’s prisms to explore how the state acts as the repository of national interest. Chinese and Indian elite media discourses offer an illuminating pair for case comparison. This study attempts to investigate the differences between national media construction of globalization in China and India.

Theoretically, this thesis argues that national media discursive construction is shaped and influenced by the national interest as defined by state elites located in a larger international political economy. Empirically, this study compared 1,004 editorials of three national newspapers— the People’s Daily, the Global Times, and the Hindu—from 1996 to 2006. Besides, 185 editorials from 2000 to 2006 from the Times of India were included for further comparison. Content analysis and discourse analysis were applied; the former acts as the prelude to the latter. This study aimed to answer three research questions. (1) What is China and India located in the international political economy? (2) How do Chinese and Indian media construct globalization in line with these contexts? (3) What explain the similarities and differences in their media constructions?

Content analysis revealed that the media in the two countries take a positive attitude towards globalization. Two media frames were prominent in referencing “globalization:” namely, the “Interest” frame and the “Identity” frame. According to the two frames, I unpacked globalization into four issues: the international issues and the benefit-cost in the neo-liberal world order; the domestic conflicts and the contestation among various groups within state; the continuity and discontinuity between history and globalization; the boundary of the “other” and “us” and the construction of the others.

The study finds that the Chinese media believe that China should accommodate to the global world in terms of economic development, but politically to fight against western hegemony to preserve China’s autonomy and legitimacy. The Indian media focus
more on military and security issues in the region and sub-continent; they hold a more critical attitude towards the international trade order than do the Chinese media. On the internal conflict issues that may arise from globalization, the Chinese media deemphasize the ill effects of globalization on disadvantaged groups; they emphasize overall national interests rather than specific interest of civil society and the people. The Indian media criticize the government for policy failure, where globalization is concerned, to take care of bad influences on people’s lives.

The study also finds that the Chinese media emphasize the historical continuity as if globalization provides a golden opportunity for China’s rise to great-power status and to revive the past glory of Chinese civilization. In contrast, the Indian media emphasize the historical discontinuity and seldom refer to the splendid Indian history. At the same time, the Chinese media accept the U.S.’s domination in the global trade and economic system, and overlook the role of other developing countries. The Indian media mainly criticize the U.S. for hurting India’s economy and military security, but hold a mixed feeling toward other third world countries.

The study concludes that the Chinese and Indian media apply different frames in globalization discourse. The Chinese media approach globalization issues mainly in an interest frame, paying attention to economic development which can bolster elite power and save the Party from legitimacy crisis. The Indian media’s construction of globalization is more identity-based and critical-oriented. China’s economic reform has produced wealth for the elite, strengthened the regime’s legitimacy, and stimulated national pride. In contrast, the Indian government’s neoliberal policies are more often criticized because the ambivalent colonial history has shaped an uncertain national identity, and thus an ambiguous media attitude towards globalization.