

**THE IMPACT OF THE MEDIA ON INTRA-STATE
CONFLICT VIS-À-VIS INTERNATIONAL
POLITICS: THE CASE OF VENEZUELA (2002)**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the content of this research work is my original work. With the exclusion of quoted references and acknowledged sources used under the supervision of Dr. Ken Ahorsu, no part of this work has been submitted for another degree or purpose.


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DEDICATION

To God and the common good of humanity.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

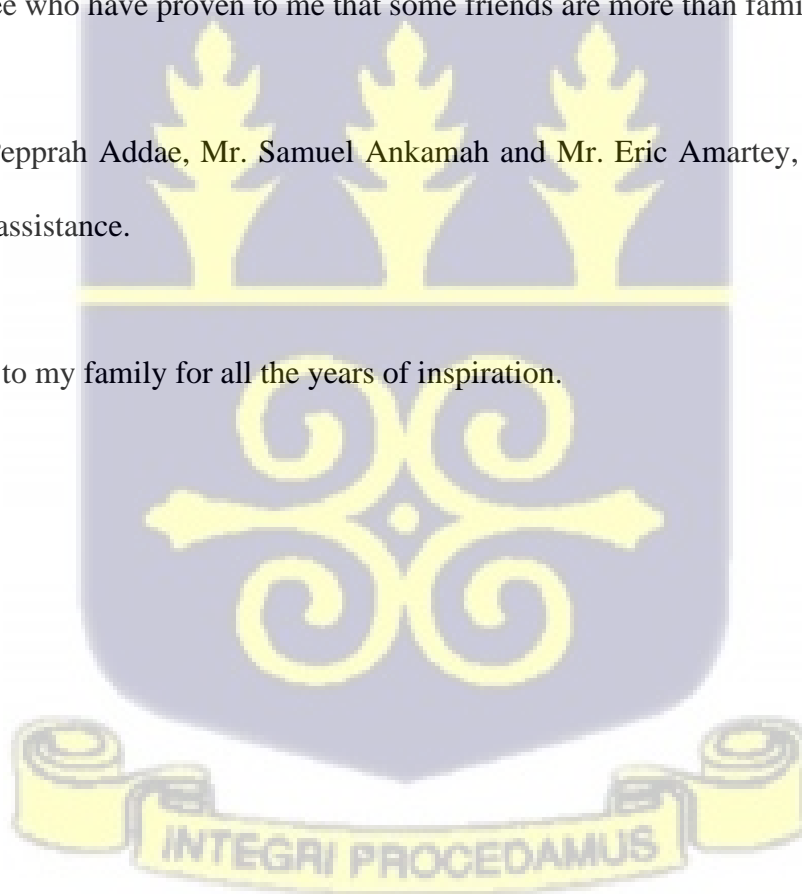
My deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Ken Ahorsu, whose inspired guidance, patience and wisdom, made successful the completion of this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	-	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	-	Cable News Network
CTV	-	Confederation of Workers of Venezuela
FEDECAMARAS	-	Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Production
ICC	-	International Criminal Court
IS	-	Islamic State
MAD	-	Mutual Assured Destruction
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDPVF	-	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NED	-	National Endowment for Democracy
OBN	-	Open Broadcast Network
OPEC	-	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OWI	-	Office of War Information
PDVSA	-	Petroleum of Venezuela
PWE	-	Political Warfare Executive
RCTV	-	Radio Caracas Television
RTLTM	-	Free Radio and Television of the Thousand Hills
RTS	-	Radio Television of Serbia
SME	-	Small and Medium Enterprise
UNCTA	-	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development
VTV	-	Venezuelan Television

WMD

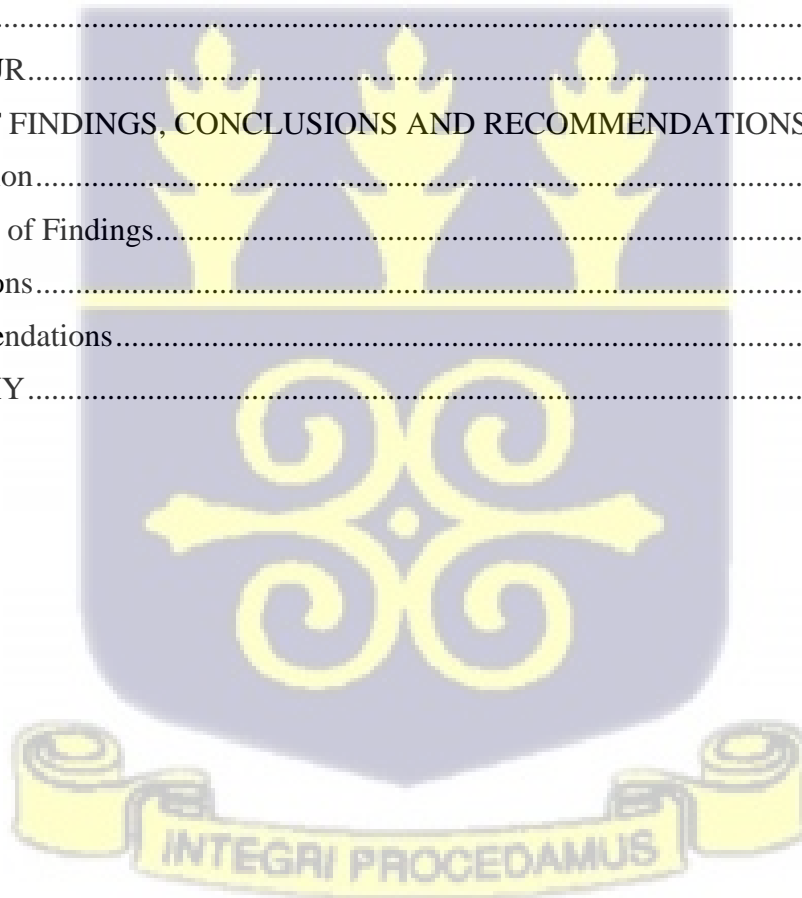
- Weapons of Mass Destruction



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ABSTRACT

The intra-state violence of the post-Cold War era, continues to demonstrate the perilous effects of the mass media on the social cohesion of states. This study therefore examines the impact of the media on intra-state conflict vis-à-vis international politics, the case of Venezuela (2002). Specifically, the study aimed at ascertaining the underlying conditions that precipitated the 2002 Venezuelan political crisis, the media's role in shaping the events leading to the said crisis, and the factors that compromised the media's role in managing the conflict. Drawing on qualitative analysis of secondary sources, the study identified two major underlying conditions that precipitated the political crisis, categorised as domestic conditions and foreign conditions. The domestic conditions include years of marginalisation of largely Amerindian, Afro-Venezuelan and Mulatto-Mestizo ethnic groups; enforcement of the constitutional requirement for a first-time direct election in the nation's main labour union (CTV); implementation of Mission Zamora (the land redistribution programme); and introduction of the hydrocarbons law which required that the State Oil Company (PDVSA) holds not less than fifty-one percent stake in any new joint venture with foreign oil companies and an increase in the minimum royalty rate of 1% to 30%. The foreign conditions were Chavez's role in OPEC's reduction in oil supply and the corresponding rise in oil prices; his alliance and supply of oil to U.S. isolated Cuba; refusal to allow US use its airspace for operations in Colombia; visit to Saddam Hussain's Iraq, Gaddafi's Libya, anti-neoliberal policies and public criticism of U.S.'s 'war on terror' in Afghanistan. The findings further suggest that the media employed white propaganda and mainly assumed a collaborative role in connivance with the elite and their foreign affiliates, which played a significant role in escalating the political crisis. The media's role in managing the conflict was also compromised by lack of institutional autonomy, undue influence by media moguls, and poor journalism ethics and standards. The study concludes that the media landscape was characterised by journalistic interventionism which negatively impacted the intra-state crisis. As much as the private media is largely to blame for the escalation of the crisis, it then again took all but the private media to defuse the political tension. Grassroot participation in the political process, attachment to the government's political programmes, word-of-mouth communication and military loyalists moderated and eventually neutralised the adverse effect of the media campaign to oust Chavez. Also, President Chavez's timely call for restraint upon his reinstatement, helped to deescalate the political crisis which could have degenerated into a civil war. The promotion of participatory democracy; and multi-stakeholder partnership at both the development and implementation phases of a policy change or reform, may help to mitigate potential resistance and media campaigns that may be aimed at destabilising the state.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Research Problem

Politics is about interests, interests are rooted in values, values are shaped by perceptions, and the media serves as a means of expressing and moulding perceptions. Since time immemorial, the media has been the driving force of ideology and perception. It acts as a mobilising and legitimising device, employed to either assimilate or dislodge alternative or contesting ideologies, interests or powers. In essence, the media are sources of power and counter-power of domination and social change.¹ This is attributed to the view that, the pivotal yet subliminal battle being fought in society, is the battle over the mind.² Given the human diversity and commonality, the influence of the media in deepening societal differences, as a potential agent of conflict; its role in highlighting shared interests, as a potential catalyst for peace; largely depends on the framing and agenda-setting of the media.

Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon that manifests in every facet of human endeavour. Conflict, when well-managed, has the potential to deepen ties which may not have previously existed. As corroborated by Dominic Barter, conflict is neither undesirable nor dangerous.³ Barter further noted that the danger is not embedded in conflict itself, but the approach to it; in ignoring it, attempting to repress it or escalating tensions via non-conciliatory behaviours.⁴ One of such non-conciliatory behaviours is the tendency of disputing parties to entangle themselves in a 'blame game'. This is often to justify their stance and rally the needed support to advance their distinct interests. At reaching a wider audience and obtaining widespread credence, in handy comes no better tool than the mass media.

An examination of literature on media and conflict studies often reveals the exploitation of the media for war or propaganda. The most cited cases describe the strategic use of early mass communication mediums by the Allies in World War I⁵ and the extensive manipulation of the media by both the Allies and Axis Powers in World War II.⁶ An unparalleled atrocity story that dominated headlines in World War I, was the alleged “German Corpse Factory”.⁷ According to the narrative, as given prominence by the British Press, the Germans were converting corpses into war commodities.⁸ Such devised moral offensives by the British media sustained the moral condemnation of Germany. It courted the support of the public and neutral states alike, thus, partly intensifying the efforts of the Allies, which culminated in the collapse of the Central Powers.⁹ Official British repudiation of the story in 1925 had an adverse impact on subsequent media reports about the holocaust. It contributed to initial unresponsiveness of nations that were asked to accept Jewish refugees.¹⁰

Conversely, the mass media can deescalate tensions by providing early warning signs of imminent violence, especially, when the credibility of the source is not compromised. Though there is relatively little literature on the positive impact of the media on conflict¹¹, its potency as a tool in the reconciliation of post-conflict societies and the promotion of peace education cannot be overemphasized. Some deliberate media attempts to promote dialogue and peace with emphasis on common grounds other than divisiveness, are best exemplified by the Bosnian Open Broadcast Network (OBN), Burundian Studio Ijambo and Cambodian UNTAC radio.¹² As acknowledged by Adolf Hitler in his book “Mein Kampf”, “The press is the chief means employed in the process of political education”.¹³ Hitler’s subsequent actions as the leader of

Nazi Germany equally proved true, that the media was the principal means of misinformation and incitement to hatred.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Unhealthy regional dynamics, power struggles within states, and the unprecedented all-pervasive development in media technology, has significantly altered the conduct of conflict in recent years. The intra-state violence of the 1990s demonstrated the perilous effect of electronic media on the social cohesion of states. The cases of Rwandan Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) and Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), immensely contributed to the genocidal campaign that led to the massacre of an estimated 800,000¹⁴ and 20,000¹⁵ people, respectively. Also, the media depiction of imagined, real or exaggerated human suffering, evokes cries for swift foreign military interventions. This often protracts, aggravates and internationalise hitherto internal violence in the absence of a prior duly authorised, comprehensive and impartial fact-finding mission.

President Hugo Chávez's anti-imperialistic rhetoric and attempt to reduce the US centrality in its trade relations, were mainly perceived as a threat to US hegemony in Latin America and the Caribbean region.¹⁶ President Chávez exercised greater control of the national oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.(PDVSA), deepened economic ties with US-isolated Cuba and championed oil price increment during Venezuela's OPEC presidency in 2000. These factors, coupled with the adverse impact an increment in oil prices could have on US economy, positioned Chávez on a collision course with the US, given the latter's dependence on import of 60% of its oil requirements.¹⁷ This resulted in what is described as a 'media war' between the

United States and Venezuela.¹⁸ The media war on Chávez was not only fought via western media, but also at the domestic level where the media was much polarised. President Chavez's policy of deepening state control of the economy, also placed him at odds with Venezuela's elites, as it threatened the latter's economic interest. This situation created hostility between the private and state-owned media, which were acting in the interest of the traditional elites and the government, respectively.

The extent of the role played by the media in the 48-hour overthrow of President Chavez and his eventual restoration and how this interacted with US interest in undermining Chavez's government, remain a subject of debate. The relationship between the media's role and US interest, and how this escalated and deescalated the political conflict in Venezuela, provides an opportunity to examine the short-lived overthrow of Chavez.

1.2 Research Questions

The research is primarily driven by the quest to find answers to the following questions:

- What are the underlying conditions that precipitated the 2002 Venezuelan coup d'état attempt?
- How did the media shape the events leading to the coup d'état and its aftermath?
- What factors, if any, compromised the media's role in managing the conflict?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The principal aim of the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

- To assess the underlying conditions that precipitated the 2002 Venezuelan coup d'état attempt.
- To examine how the media shaped events leading to the coup d'état and its aftermath.
- To identify factors, if any, compromised the media's role in managing the conflict.

1.4 Scope

In terms of scope, the study generally focuses on how the mass media impacted the political crisis that briefly interrupted the democratic order in Venezuela. The study takes particular interest in newspapers, radio and television networks which dominated the Venezuelan media landscape within that period under examination. Among such media outlets are Venevision, Globovision, Televen, RCTV, El Nacional and La Noticia, to name a few. It further explores the power structure in modern states, the potential contest of interests that may exist therein, and how the media is instrumentalized. The study also examines the political events leading to the crisis that unfolded in Venezuela in April 2002 and its aftermath.

1.5 Rationale

Considered the fourth pillar of democracy, the media plays a vital role in informing and shaping public opinion, and as well confers legitimacy and creates support for a course of action, at both the domestic and international levels. Furthermore, powerful states have often used media as instruments to promote their interests in political crisis, in states such as Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Libya. This research seeks to shed light on the role of the mass media in intra-state conflicts with

emphasis on Venezuela. It also seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on the dual nature of media impact on conflicts and how its influence can be harnessed in peace building, conflict management and prevention. The case of Venezuela is worth examining in order to understand the intersection of interests between hegemonic states and the media in the overthrow of a democratically elected president.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework underpinning this study is hegemony. The concept of Gramscian hegemony is germane to the Venezuelan context, given the view that, the concept of hegemony as portrayed by President Chávez' government, derives from Gramsci's intellectual tradition or perspective.¹⁹ Antonio Gramsci defined Hegemony (“predominance by consent”) as a “condition whereby a dominant class exercises a political, intellectual and moral leadership within a hegemonic system strengthened by a shared world view or ‘organic ideology’ ”.²⁰ Organic ideology in this case refers to the integration of varied class interests into an amalgamated system of socioeconomic relations propagated through the media, schools and other components or groupings of civil society.²¹ As noted by Gramsci, the dominant class governs by consent of the governed by way of advocating, protecting or promoting some interests of the subaltern masses. Therefore, the obligation of the subaltern masses is to overcome the leadership of the dominant elitist class, thus by themselves become hegemonic.

Central to Gramscian hegemony is his triadic concept of a modern state:

- i. The political society;
- ii. Civil society; and
- iii. Economic sphere/Market.

The political society refers to the state apparatus and its institutions of control such as the military, police, and the court. The civil society refers to the 'private' or 'non-state' mediating apparatus of hegemony between the state and the economic sphere/market. It includes family, schools, religious bodies, trade unions, and the media. The economic sphere or market refers to 'capital' or commercial activities which is only a separate entity from the state, in a capitalist society. This is largely in direct reference to private multinational companies, and SMEs.²² According to Gramsci, as noted by Perry, the civil society as a revolutionary project can neutralise the coercive machinery of a state thereby making room for the subaltern masses to obtain political power.²³ By creating conditions that leads to a consensual society, devoid of the creation of a new subaltern group, the new hegemony may no longer require a coercive apparatus to protect it.²⁴

As postulated by Cañizalez, hegemony in its pure sense is unattainable without encompassing political, economic and cultural dimensions.²⁵ Vital to this view is the role of civil society (societal actors) in propagating or legitimising hegemony. For that matter, it is of strategic imperative to use a mediated mass communication mechanism, rather than direct relationships between the numerous societal actors. The media plays a crucial role in the mediation since diverse power holders may reach the masses through the media.²⁶ The media acts as an ideological battlefield depended on by the dominant class in an effort to sustain their dominance by consent. Gramsci observed that hegemony requires constant negotiation between the classes and that friction can be eased, provided the dominant class are able to hold on to influential institutions such as the mass media and satisfactorily meet the demands of the masses.

Critical of Gramscian hegemony is Perry Anderson, who believes that Gramsci meant that the state has shifted from ruling by coercion to ruling by consent of the subaltern via ideological and cultural establishments such as schools and the media.²⁷ This he viewed, as a break away from the Marxists concept of a state as a coercive element by referencing Lenin who referred to the state as ‘bodies of armed men’. On the contrary, Peter Thomas debunks Anderson’s critique of the supposed break away from the Marxist concept of a state. This he premised on Gramsci’s view on the ‘integral state’ as an integration of civil society with the coercive force of a state. In other words, the dominant class may have shifted from mere coercion to consent, but its hegemony is backed by force in the event of non-compliance, thus consent armoured with coercion.²⁸

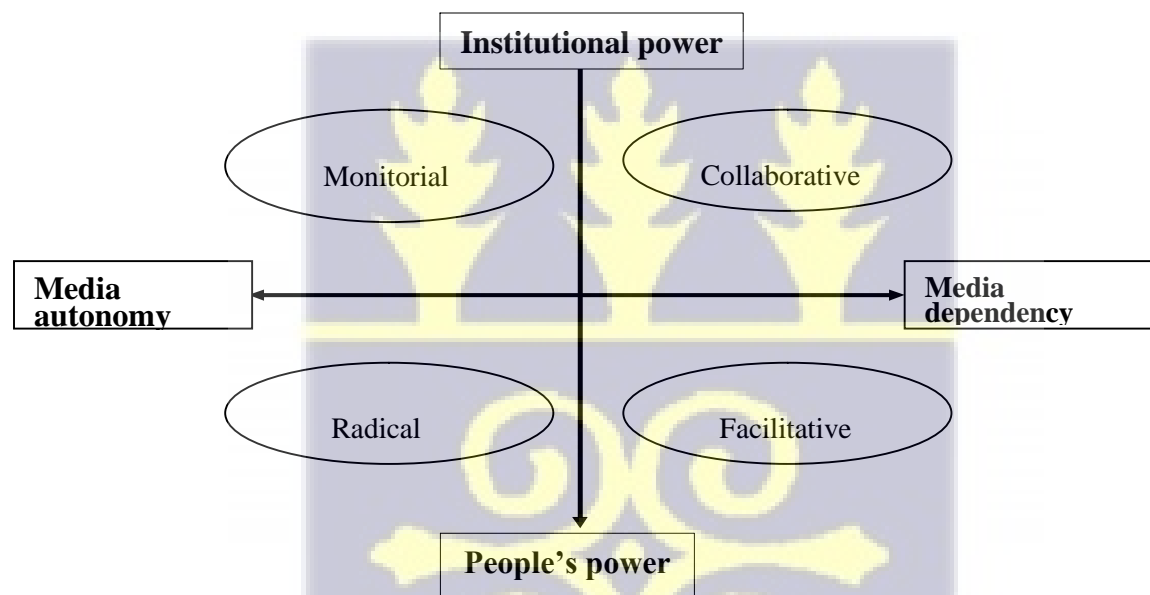
The Gramscian concept of hegemony, is however pertinent to this study, since it highlights how civil society and the media in particular, played an instrumental role in escalating and deescalating the Venezuelan political crisis which had the tendency to metamorphose into a full-blown civil war.

1.7 Literature Review

The role and impact of the media on intra-state conflict is by no means an uncharted territory in the literature. While some scholars previously delved into the theoretical basis of the role of the media, others empirically unravelled its effect on conflict. But no conflict is the same, thus presupposing the existence of varying effects (i.e. nature or intensity of effect) of media as may be influenced by a variety of conditions.

In “Normative Theories of the Media”,²⁹ Christians et al., delineate four roles of the media. These roles they described as: 1. Monitorial; 2. Collaborative; 3. Radical; and 4. Facilitative, by character. The suggested media roles were born out of the need to underscore the quandaries that arise when the media encounters conflicting interests as prevails in every political system.³⁰ This is illustrated below:

Figure 1.1: Normative roles of the media



Source: Christians et al., (2009)³¹

- ***Monitorial Role***

This role is reported to be in line with the conventional function of the press.³²It entails the dissemination of information about all events deemed relevant to the public.³³According to Aitamurto and Varma,³⁴a monitorial media has objectivity and transparency as its focal point, hence more concerned with keeping a check on power while bringing social predicaments to

light. Arguably, this role has more to do with investigative journalism/reporting. Having originally contributed to the conceptualisation of the normative media roles, Professor Nordenstreng³⁵ contends, that the monitorial role is somewhat dependent on the powers that be, even if critical of them. This he predicated on the supposition that information is mostly sourced from the corridors of power, thereby rendering the agenda susceptible to the dictates of the elites or ruling class.

- ***Radical Role***

The radical media role is centred on raising widespread consciousness of the misconducts perpetrated by those in power and attempts to effect a change of the status-quo.³⁶ This role is founded on the need to overturn an unjust politico-economic power structure that benefits a hegemonic alliance of a few, at the expense of the subaltern masses. The radical undertakings of the press are often to incite the underprivileged masses who have been “socialised into passivity or a false consciousness” to resist the injustices of a prevailing politico-economic order.³⁷ This was largely characteristic of the media outlets that were actively involved in the fight against colonialism, racial segregation, sexism, and the like. It therefore comes as no surprise that Aitamurto and Varma likened them to an advocacy press.³⁸ Radical media is also reminiscent of the activities undertaken by the White Rose resistance movement in Munich, during World War II.

- ***Collaborative Role***

In stark contrast to the radical role, the collaborative media, as the term suggests, indicates a cooperative working relationship between the press and the ruling class. Not only is the collaborative media an integral part of the politico-economic system, but also functions within

the ambit of the system.³⁹ The collaborative role is more in line with the advancement of the market's agenda, that of the state or a foreign power. As observed by Christians et al.,⁴⁰ this role is mostly advocated if not mandated during crisis, emergency, or threat from within or outside a domestic power structure. This is corroborated by Aitamurto and Varma⁴¹ who argue that cooperative media operates agreeably with external institutions. If Aitamurto and Varma's observation is anything to go by, then one may be inclined to assert that the collaborative role of the press is more or less a matter of "who pays the piper calls the tune". In this case, the media assumes a public relations function.

- ***Facilitative Role***

The facilitative role of the press involves the widening of access to media platforms for grassroots participation in the political or democratisation process. A facilitative media moderates the public discourse on issues of common interest to society in general. It enhances inclusiveness, consensus building, accommodation of diverse views and engenders a sense of collective purpose while attenuating apathy among the populace.⁴² It is therefore expected, as argued by the Hutchins Commission and cited in Christians et al.,⁴³ that the facilitative press should uplift "social conflict from the plane of violence to the plane of discussion". This role represents a significant shift from the traditional notion of viewing the wider audience as individual consumers of 'media selected and framed news' to a participative public, consequential to reaching democratic solutions to public problems. It is a role more associated with civic or public journalism.

These media roles postulated by Christians et al.⁴⁴ are vital to this study as they provide clearly defined parameters of universal characters the press may assume in their operations. It also provides viable grounds on which to assess the impact of the media on conflict, in specific context of each of the conceptualised media roles. It is worth noting that these media roles are not mutually exclusive though they define the unique and usually-contrasting motives and orienting principles in the media profession. The challenge, however, is Christians et al.'s association of the monitorial role with objective reporting. The question that necessarily follows is, "what is the media's objective or agenda?" What Christians et al. omit or somewhat fail to stress is that media framing of events may entail unintended biases in the wording of the information they relay, thus opening the door to subjectivity.

It is also worthy of note, that the media, every now and then, does assume shifting roles in tandem with the changing spirit of the times. They may either by coercion, convenience or enticement switch allegiances as may reflect in their reportage, depending on the power at play. Just as the discourse on the distinction between a freedom fighter and a terrorist is somewhat a matter of perception and interest, same can be said of the labels assigned the roles played by the press. In the sense that, a monitorial media (watchdog) expected to serve as a collaborative media (lapdog) in times of war, risk being labelled a radical media and even considered subversive, should it within its monitorial function report on the war crimes committed by its home country.

Aitamurto and Varma, in "The Constructive Role of Journalism",⁴⁵ lay emphasis on what is described as solutions journalism or constructive media role. This may be viewed as a paradigm

shift of the media's supposed traditional position of a neutral observer to an active participant in the proposition of solutions to remedy the societal problems uncovered by the press. Admittedly, Aitamurto and Varma acknowledge heightened interventionism in reportage as a key aspect of the constructive media role.⁴⁶ What they however first failed to acknowledge is that this role is as old as media practice, given that practitioners by virtue of slanting a news report in favour of a particular line of action, subtly suggest a solution, intended to elicit public support for their agenda. Secondly, the term 'solutions journalism' does not render media proposed solutions as valid, cogent or morally right, as much as the Nazi media supposed 'final solution to the Jewish question' was no solution in the very reasonable sense of the word. This is not to suggest that the media is incapable of exercising a true and well-intended constructive role, but to avert the potential blunder of uncritically taking as truth, what the media claims to be by ideals than what it truly is by function.

An interdisciplinary approach by Eytan Gilboa, in his article, "Media and International Conflict"⁴⁷, puts forward four phases of conflict founded on what he describes as "a critical condition and a prime intervention goal". They are: (i) onset-prevention phase; (ii) escalation-management phase; (iii) de-escalation-resolution phase; and (iv) termination-reconciliation phase.⁴⁸ According to him, the critical conditions are revised phases of the traditional stages of conflict (i.e., the onset phase representing the "pre-violence stage"; escalation phase representing the "violence stage"; and de-escalation and termination phases representing the "post-violence stage"). He argued, that the media could spearhead a conciliatory agenda or complement mediation efforts as pertains to the corresponding intervention goals of prevention, management, resolution and reconciliation. Gilboa further stressed that the impact of the media roles or

interventions in conflict, could present functional or dysfunctional outcomes, depending on the latent or manifest media functions as mirrored in: (i) surveillance, that is media reports; (ii) correlation, that is commentary and editorial opinion; (iii) cultural broadcast, as may pertain to history or belief system; (iv) entertainment; and (v) mobilisation.

It must be noted that Gilboa provides a comprehensive analytical framework for assessing the role and potential impact of media on conflict, albeit not applying it to a case study. This reaffirms the view that no media effect on conflict yield same outcome given the varying characteristics of each conflict. This may explain why mainstream media coverage of conflict in Libya attracted swift and decisive military intervention, whereas media coverage of conflict in Syria was approached by the US and its western allies with caution. Then again, this research seeks to fill the literature gap that exist in his non-application of the proposed framework on a case study. As he accurately concluded, an application of the intervention goals on each of his suggested conflict stages, from the media perspective, will help fill the literature gap needed to understand how the media shapes the onset and termination of present and future conflicts.

Gadi Wolfsfeld in his work “Political Leaders, Media, and Conflict”⁴⁹ elaborates the media role in conflict from a ‘power’ perspective. He asserts that the greater the extent of elite consensus in support of a war, the more probable it is for the media to reflect and reinforce that consensus. In like manner, McChesney argue that influential elites in the media industry bear the potential to influence government policy in a way that favours their commercial interests.⁵⁰ In as much as state media has been equated to a conduit for advancing a ruling government’s interest, a number of scholars also argue that neither does the private media better serve the public interest, as they

prioritise the commercial interest of their investors.⁵¹ In safeguarding corporate interests, capitalist globalisation requires media hegemony to popularise and legitimise ideologies and mechanisms complementary to deregulation and privatisation.⁵² It is for this reason not strange, that the mass media was significantly employed at the height of the cold war, to idolise western values, principles of democracy and capitalism while demonising communist rule. This landmark ideological contest in the international system required media hegemony and propaganda for that matter, to advance the distinct interests of the Western and Eastern blocs.

Inferring from Wolfsfeld's⁵³ power perspective of media role, it can be said that the effect of the media may be unsympathetic to the party in opposition to the elite interest the media represents. One may perhaps argue per the normative roles postulated by Christians et al.⁵⁴ that the monitorial and facilitative media functions may be most appropriate in situations of conflicting interest, where objective or constructive media reporting is vital to de-escalation, resolution and reconciliation efforts.

Still on the power perspective, Therborn Goran states that, the social and political might of capitalism is its capacity to please other classes with individual material rewards. This he claims subverts the intrinsic solidarity and collectivity of the working class.⁵⁵ As such, ideologies contrary to capitalism such as socialism and communism, have lost their relevance in the United States and other developed countries where they have little to offer, materially, to the wide middle classes. Nevertheless, the benefits of capitalism have proven elusive in Africa, Latin America and to a lesser extent the Middle East. This has led to the actual rise and as well the perpetuation of a cycle of leadership professing to champion the interest of the subaltern masses.

Only a few have truly backed their populist rhetoric with action-oriented policies, much to the dismay of the global capitalist system, of which Chávez' Venezuela was no exception.

Louis Althusser argued that the culture of compliance within the domain of capitalism is created mainly through the educational system as was the case of the church in the Middle Ages.⁵⁶ Lately, corporate media exercises greater hegemony over the minds of the working class than the educational system. According to Gerald Sussman, media hegemony does not only rely on ideological understanding, but propaganda, to manifest the elites' intended outcome.⁵⁷ In essence, hegemony and counter hegemony as may relate to media narrative and counter-media narrative tends to fall on media propaganda in an effort to retain or dislodge the existing dominant ideology. Though media hegemony may be sometimes be characterised by the diffusion of propaganda or indoctrination of 'false consciousness', persuasion to elicit consent is more of the agenda than coercion.

It is also worth noting that the contest for media hegemony hinges on interests, and once a group's core interest in the political arena is unmet, political violence follows and the need to rally support and obtain international legitimacy, becomes the ultimate goal of the disputing factions. It is within this context, and the various literature reviewed, that this study examines the impact of the media on the Venezuelan crisis in 2002.

1.8 Sources of Data

Data for the study was obtained from secondary sources. The secondary materials employed consist of media reports, scholarly journals and books. The criteria for gathering or selecting

information included relevance to research objectives, author credential and depth of analysis. The study also took into consideration contemporary articles material to the study.

1.9 Methodology

The study employed qualitative analysis of secondary sources. Qualitative research methodology is a systematic technique of enquiry designed to facilitate the generation of study findings by concentrating more on nonnumeric data than numerical data. The choice of a qualitative method was informed by the need to offer an interpretive and descriptive account of the topic under study. Accordingly, qualitative research was employed so as to gain an understanding, and by extension describe the impact of the media on the Venezuelan crisis and how it deescalated the political conflict.

On the other hand, analysis of secondary sources as a qualitative research instrument, is a method of examining written, verbal or visual communication messages.⁵⁸ This approach also involves an analytic review of credible and relevant journals, media reports, books and other academic materials. In this vein, scholarly materials that covered the events leading to the 2002 Venezuelan coup, including the contest of media hegemony between Chávez and the opposition, were critically analysed.

1.10 Arrangement of Chapters

The dissertation comprises four chapters as organised in the following order:

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Intra-State Conflicts, Propaganda and the Need for Peace Media

Chapter Three: The 2002 Venezuelan Crisis and the Role of the Media

Chapter Four: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations.



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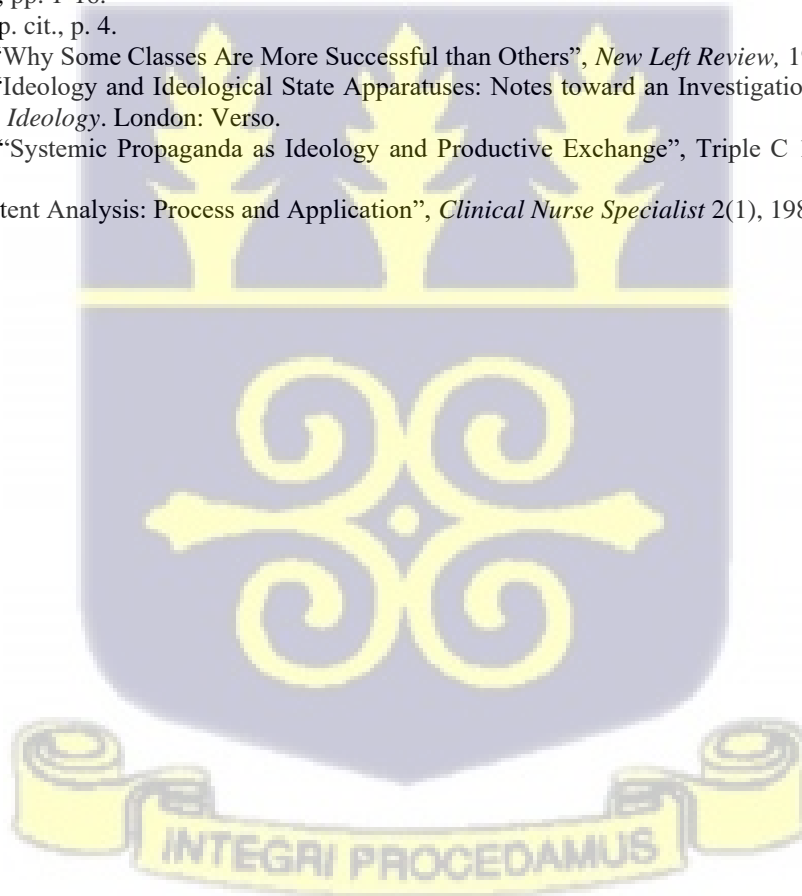
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CHAPTER TWO

INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS, PROPAGANDA AND THE NEED FOR PEACE MEDIA

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines intra-state power struggle, propaganda and political violence, the concept of peace media, as well as the mass media and politics in Latin America. It also offers a brief overview of the Venezuelan issue and the political history of Venezuela from independence in 1811 to Hugo Chávez' attempted coups in 1992.

2.1 Nature of Intra-State power struggle

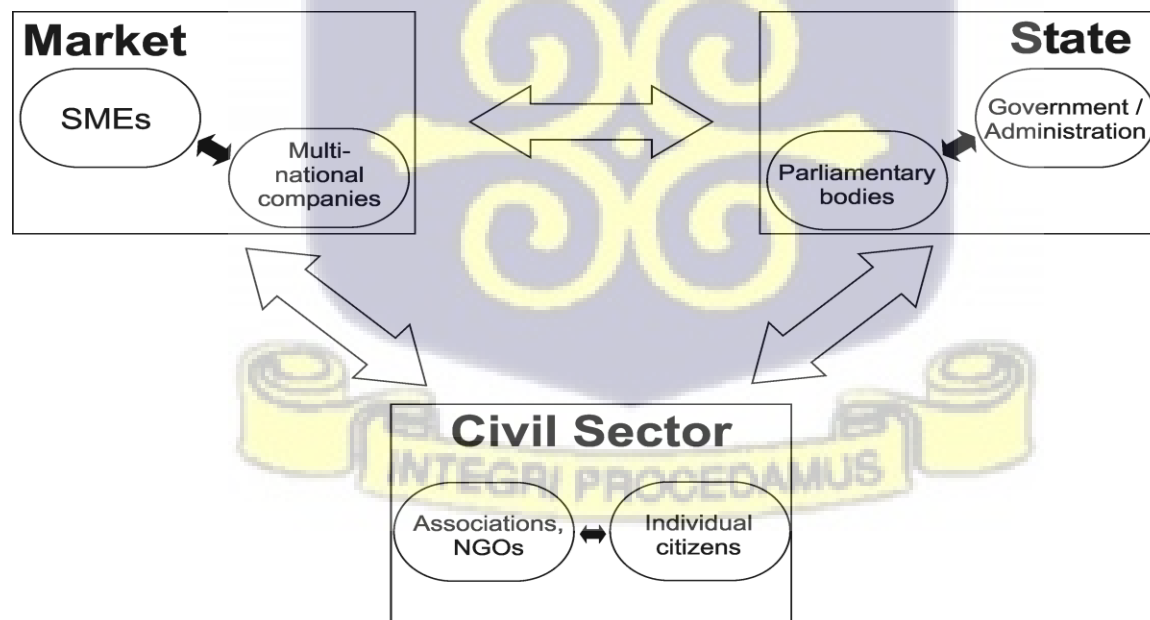
In the annals of human history, the quest for power has been considered the fundamental stimulus or basis for human and state behaviour.¹ To wield power, is to have command over resources, the ability to influence people's opinion and attitude, and capacity to act of one's own volition.² Any attempt, therefore, to either balance, resist or dispossess the power of the dominant force is a clear manifestation of a power struggle. Sterling-Folker and Shinko averred, that power is pervasive and operates as both a capability and an effect.³ Therefore, it is in its effect that power is made evident. Noteworthy is the fact that incompatible interests begin with a disagreement of opinion, and in the absence of a successful mediation mechanism, violence is resorted to.

According to historical records, there were 110 intra-state conflicts and 56 interstate conflicts between 1816 and 1945.⁴ More so, out of the 131 conflicts recorded in the post-cold war era, only 8 were between states.⁵ It can be inferred from the preceding reports that, whereas interstate conflict is on the decline, intra-state conflict remains the most prevalent form of conflict in the

world. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and its MAD effect (nuclear deterrence), strategic alliance and the principle of collective defence, the UN and its promotion of cooperation, have all largely contributed to the decline in interstate armed conflicts. Instead, the strategic use of smart power, as relates to the use of economic incentives or sanctions, and show of military force or threat of it, have become the major features of power struggle in the international system.

Muzaffer Yilmaz observed that though intra-state conflicts may seem local, they tend to assume an international dimension resulting from increasing global interdependence.⁶ This is made evident in foreign actors' provision of political, military, economic and even mainstream media support for local actors in internal power struggles. The main local actors in this case, as in accordance with Antonio Gramsci's triadic concept of a modern state are; the civil sector, the state and the market.

Figure 2.1: The Intra-State Power Struggle Triangle



Source: Adopted from Kubicek et al., "Political Triangle."⁷

In every democratic dispensation, power is said to emanate from individual citizens who constitute civil society. Legitimacy is then conferred and political authority entrusted to the State and members of government. The state is therefore expected as the principal representative of civil society, to advance the collective interest of the citizenry, devoid of undue preferential treatments based on the distinct identities of the people, as may pertain to faith, ethnicity, domestic regional groupings and social stratification. That notwithstanding, these very same distinct identities of the various components of civil society, plays a significant role in shaping the people's choice of political candidate.

It is normally expected that a party voted into power champions the common interest of civil society. Nevertheless, the government as a political entity also has its own interest in maintaining power to be able to advance whatever interest or goal it has before it. The vote of civil society is required to obtain power, while monetary resource mostly from the capital-driven market is required to sustain power. This brings to bear the influence of the market, in shaping state policies through lobby groups, legislators or government officials. A typical example is the recent amendment to Hungary's labour laws, alternatively referred to as the "slave laws". A law which allows employers to demand overtime working hours from the previous limit of 250 to 400 hours per year, while overtime payment can be delayed by three years.⁸ The law which is supposedly intended to mitigate severe labour shortage and woo investors, naturally sparked nationwide protest and brought to question the government's commitment to the citizenry.

The civil sector as a collective unit is composed of citizens with different religious backgrounds, ethnicity and economic interests. The inability of the government to evenly balance the emphasis

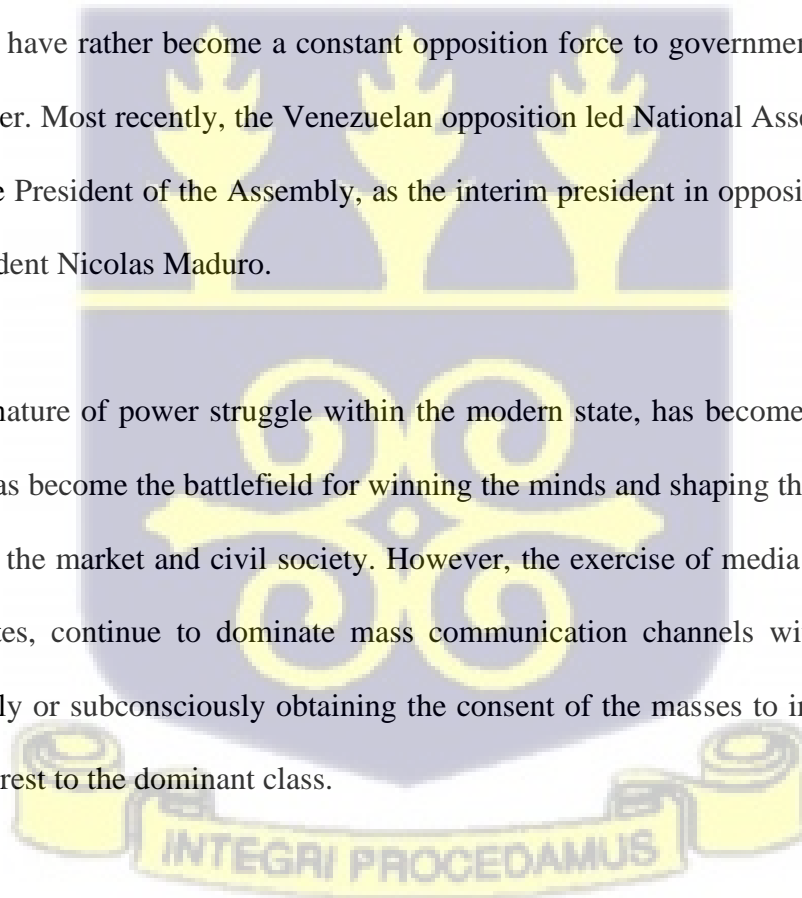
it places on the sub-group interests of such a diverse civil society, may itself lead to the feeling of marginalisation, thus necessitating mobilisation by that section, to advance their interest via violent or non-violent means. Bitter historical inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations may also compound the situation, hence leading to tribal and religious conflicts within states. The Biafran war, emergence of Boko Haram, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Rwandan genocide, the 1980 Liberian coup d'état and the Yugoslav wars, are just a few of the outcomes of government's failure to justly manage the political, economic, ethnic and religious differences, interests and struggles within the state.

At the market level, the competitive intensity that characterise an open economy, may result in a struggle between and among SMEs, multinational companies, civil society and even the government, on issues hinging on protectionism, economic liberalisation and environmental safety. On one hand, the multinational companies in their struggle to increase profit may be compelled to deepen their influence in government circles so as to secure barriers to entry and other favourable trade regulations. The SMEs may also form associations that may protest the infiltration of foreign companies that are likely to unfavourably compete with them in their small-scale businesses. Civil society may also be faced with environmental degradation emanating from the market activities whose operations may not sufficiently benefit immediate members of the community in which they operate. Though it is expected of the state to regulate the market in the best interest of the citizenry, pursuit of its own power sustaining interest (through the support of multinational companies) in misalignment with the interest of civil society, often exacerbates tension. The execution of the non-violent environmental activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was based on a false testimony engineered by Nigeria's Abacha led regime in

connivance with Shell. This partly contributed to the rise of an armed group, the NDPVF, which resorted to violence as a means of expressing similar economic and ecological sentiments, non-violently trumpeted by the late Saro-Wiwa.

At the state or government level, the power relations between and among the legislature, executive and the judiciary, with diverse interests and political affiliations, may also generate its own struggle for power. The executive for instance which includes the president, ministers and the security force, is a potential agent of power struggle as may manifest between the government and the military. Then again, political parties who are supposed to be partners in the political process have rather become a constant opposition force to government policies in their struggle for power. Most recently, the Venezuelan opposition led National Assembly, announced Juan Guaido, the President of the Assembly, as the interim president in opposition to the elected incumbent President Nicolas Maduro.

In essence, the nature of power struggle within the modern state, has become so complex such that the media has become the battlefield for winning the minds and shaping the attitudes of both the government, the market and civil society. However, the exercise of media hegemony by the powerful in states, continue to dominate mass communication channels with their ideology, hence consciously or subconsciously obtaining the consent of the masses to implement policies of particular interest to the dominant class.



2.2 Propaganda, International Politics and Political Violence

In a value-neutral context, propaganda means to “propagate” or spread an ideology.⁹ It originally derived from a clerical body established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622, namely, “Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide” (Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith). Its core mandate was to spread the Roman Catholic faith to the New World.¹⁰ The misleading practices that were in subsequent years carried out in the name of propaganda, is said to have given the term a negative connotation. According to Fitzmaurice, propaganda was formerly a form of religious indoctrination and its shift to political indoctrination reflects the shift of societal power from the church to the state.¹¹ Fitzmaurice’ description of the original concept of propaganda as religious indoctrination, somewhat presupposes manipulative undertones even in the early years of its usage. The Church’s propagation of salvation and atonement of sin through Christ; and justification of slavery as ordained by God as a punishment for human sinfulness is quite paradoxical, especially given that conversion to the Christian faith did not automatically render the enslaved free.¹² However, propaganda of ‘modern times’ refers to the distorted, incomplete, partially true or completely false one-sided communication, used to sway people into a particular line of thought or action. As upheld by Jowett and O’Donnell, the ultimate and often concealed intent of propaganda is to manipulate behaviour.¹³

Historical examples of this supposedly evolved concept, can be traced to ancient times, when Kings declared wars in ‘consultation’ with the gods, to legitimize their intended action before their subjects, to recruit and marshal them against a targeted enemy. For instance, the Assyrians expansionist agenda was pursued under the guise of battling enemies of their god Assur, and their victory, a demonstration of the glory of their deity.¹⁴

Propaganda differs from other forms of communication in terms of ideological influence, concealment (of either the source, objective of the source and/or the other side of the story) and obstruction of objective assessment by providing biased information.¹⁵ Propaganda is also classified as either white, grey or black in relation to source and accuracy.

According to Jowett and O'Donnell, white propaganda is an overt form of propaganda which acknowledges the origin of information and tends to be accurate as it may entail an element of partial or half-truth.¹⁶ Half-truth in this sense implies a piece of information with credible elements which can be evidently proven, thus serving as a reasonable ground on which an information is taken as truth in its entirety. This often leads to false conclusions, as may be intended by the source or propagandist. Notwithstanding the level of truth embedded in white propaganda, it is often framed and presented in a manner purposed to make the source appear as the 'good guy' with the best ideology and well-intended principles of action.¹⁷ A typical and contemporary example of white propaganda, was the mainstream media's biased reporting of the fight against terror in Syria's Aleppo and Iraq's Mosul in late 2016. The US led coalition strikes to liberate Mosul from IS (Islamic State) control, and the Russian backed strikes to liberate Aleppo from Al-Nusra, showcased the double standards of Western media and political leaders. The facts pertaining to the liberation exercises which concurrently took place in Mosul and Aleppo, were presented in a manner that overemphasized the collateral damage in Aleppo while de-emphasizing that in Mosul. A comparative analysis of mainstream media framing of such events with words such as 'siege or fall of Aleppo' by/to the Syrian 'regime' and 'liberation of Mosul' by the Iraqi government, clearly went beyond the media presentation of facts to shaping audience interpretation of facts in favour of one party as against the other.

Black propaganda is the mass dissemination of fabricated information with a source either concealed or credited to a false authority.¹⁸ This covert form of propaganda allows for the broadcast of the “biggest lies” or most creative deceits since the source is either unattributed or falsely attributed, thereby leaving the sender unaccountable to the targeted audience. During World War II, the BBCs foreign broadcast was overseen by the Political Warfare Executive (PWE).¹⁹ The PWE was responsible for black propaganda activities meant to convey subversive messages in an effort to demoralise the enemy. For that purpose, clandestine radio stations were established. Notable amongst them was Gustav Siegfried Eins (GS1), which was later replaced by Soldatensender Calais (Soldiers’ Radio Calais). Purporting to be reporting within Nazi Germany, the South-East England based GS1 masqueraded itself as a mouthpiece of disgruntled yet patriotic German soldiers. While sounding as a radical Nazi loyalist, the host, by the nom de guerre “Der Chef”, berated Hitler for being too easy going; and the low and middle Nazi officials for being overly self-indulgent and corrupt at the expense of the gallant German soldiers dying at the warfront.²⁰ Der Chef ridiculed Hitler’s deputy, Rudolf Hess, describing his unaccompanied flight to negotiate for peace with the UK, as an act of cowardice and throwing himself and the Germans “at the mercy of a drunken old cigar-smoking Jew, Churchill”.²¹ This fits well into Harun Yahya’s depiction of black propaganda as emanating “from a friendly source yet conducted with a hostile attitude”.²² This was purposely to lend credibility to the hostile source, as a rather friendly broadcaster who seem concerned about the looming perils awaiting his compatriots at the battlefield and the supposed sexual abuses meted out to the wives of soldiers by Nazi officials back home. The effectiveness of PWE radio broadcasts even won the admiration of the German Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels.²³

Like the British PWE black propaganda radio broadcasts, the U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) conducted its psychological warfare propaganda through 'Radio 1212'; likewise, the Soviet based 'German People's Radio' which claimed to be operating within enemy territory. The arch enemy of the Allies, Nazi Germany, conducted similar covert operations mainly targeted at the British under the supervision of its propaganda department, "Buro Concordia". This department operated a number of black clandestine radios with the most prominent being the New British Broadcasting Station. Usually hosted by William Joyce, popularly referred to as Lord Haw-Haw, the covert radio stations were by design meant to incite workers' strikes and sabotage (as was the case of Workers' Challenge Radio), and to incite Scottish rebellion (as was the case of Radio Caledonia).²⁴

On the other hand, Grey propaganda has an ambiguous, correctly or incorrectly identifiable source and the accuracy of information is uncertain.²⁵ In relation to source, white propaganda is directly credited, black propaganda is falsely attributed and grey propaganda is correctly or incorrectly identifiable. As regards information accuracy, white propaganda is accurate yet omissive, black propaganda peddles major fabrications or falsehoods, whereas grey propaganda spreads information which may be true or false but shrouded in uncertainty, either by design or default. Harun Yahya opined that grey propaganda is broadcasted by enemy or hostile sources, often in connivance with collaborators within the targeted territory.²⁶ By demonising and delegitimising the adversarial party in collusion with internal collaborators, grey propaganda usually arouses the interest, sympathy and support of the international community and the general public. This serves as a pre-violation justification for an imminent economic sanction

and/or military action. According to Shalvi et al., such justifications excuse impending violations as less immoral thus diminishing anticipated ethical dissonance.²⁷

A typical post-cold war example of grey propaganda was the disinformation employed to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq. On the very evening of the September 11 attacks, President Bush Jr. remarked "...maybe we'll be going after Iraq now..." recounted Ray McGovern, a former CIA analyst.²⁸ This set the tone for Colin Powell's landmark speech to the UN Security Council, in his capacity as the US Secretary of State in February 2003. In his self-assured case for war, he stressed that not everything known to the US about Iraq's possession of WMDs could be disclosed.²⁹ However, Powell's supposed disclosures were largely sourced from the questionable accounts of one Iraqi defector, Rafid Ahmed Alwan, codenamed 'Curveball'.³⁰ Disregarding counter-evidence from the UN arms inspectors,³¹ the Bush led administration spearheaded a media offensive that set the ground for invasion, protracted armed conflict (2003-2011) and its attendant civilian casualties, human right violations, instability and notably, the rise of ISIS. The 2016 published Chilcot Inquiry further corroborated the earlier claim by the UN arms inspectors that no evidence whatsoever existed of Iraq's possession of WMDs.³²

Similarly, the 2011 NATO led military intervention in Libya was fuelled by grey propaganda. The mainstream media's reportage of supposed mass rape by Gaddafi's forces was given plausible voice by the then US secretary of state, Hilary Clinton and the chief prosecutor for ICC, Moreno Ocampo; with the latter suggesting existence of evidence. Subsequent investigation by Amnesty International invalidated the claim. An unsubstantiated claim which had served as one of the bases for NATO's war in Libya. This paved way for the underreported rape, arbitrary

detention, torture and summary execution of civilians that ensued. Such crimes were committed particularly at Sirte and Tawergha by the western sponsored internal collaborators. Interestingly, the US and its western allies rather dismissed Col. Gaddafi's claim of al-Qaeda infiltration into Libyan territories as propaganda and a desperate attempt to save his regime.³³ Once again, the British government admitted that the Libyan intervention like the Iraqi invasion was "founded on erroneous assumptions and an incomplete understanding of the evidence" as embedded in a 2016 report by the British Foreign Affairs Committee.³⁴ Also, Col. Gaddafi's claim of al-Qaeda infiltration was eventually proven true with the rise of ISIS and al-Qaeda elements in Libya.

Deducing from the foregoing review as in consonance with Deutsch Morton's observation, intra-state relations between and among the civil, economic and political actors of a modern state is characterised by cooperative and competitive interests.³⁵ The competitive interests or perceived incompatible differences is what consistently fuels internal struggles for power, hence giving rise to perpetual conflict within states.³⁶ Where conflict in this sense implies the "clashing of overlapping interests around national values and issues (self-determination, distribution of domestic resource or international power) between two or more parties".³⁷ As succinctly put by Hans Morgenthau, "international politics, like all politics (such as domestic/intra-state politics), is a struggle for power".³⁸ If politics by Morgenthau's proposition can be described as analogous to a struggle for power, then in that same vein, politics can be considered an agent of conflict both at the domestic and international spheres. Conflict can therefore be as basic as an ideological difference, ideological antagonism or even manifest in severe forms as violence and destruction. According to Pfetsch and Rohloff, the severity or intensity of conflict depends on the

domestic and international conditions (support or pressure) as well as the perceptions and actions of actors and the constituents they represent.³⁹

In the anarchic international political system, every sovereign state seeks to advance its national interest, (often in conflict with those of other states) through the strategic and tactical use of the foreign policy instruments at their disposal. One of such central instruments in respect to this study, is control of the media or influence over it. The quest for global hegemony in the aftermath of the Second World War assumed an ideological form between communism and capitalism. Such ideological antagonism was made manifest not only through proxy wars, brinkmanship and formation of multinational alliances, but most importantly via the media, in an effort to win the hearts and minds of the masses. Alqama and Nawaz asseverated that media portrayal of US and its liberal ideals of individual rights, freedom and democracy were masks veiling the interests of a global capitalist class to obtain legitimacy.⁴⁰

The US engineered overthrow of democratically elected governments such as those of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953, Guatemalan President Jacob Arbenz in 1954 and D.R. Congo's Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in 1960 lends credence to Alqama and Nawaz observations. Prime Minister Mosaddegh's overthrow was motivated by his nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry as President Arbenz overthrow was due to his agrarian reforms which threatened the corporate interest of the United Fruit Company, hence their lobby of the US government for his overthrow. These and many other foreign orchestrated coups and support for autocratic regimes by none other than the leading crusader of democracy, brought to question its professed quest to promote governance by consent of the governed. More so, the

Soviet Union while ignoring its own repression of ethnic and racial minorities, capitalised on the brutal force unleashed on the non-violent civil rights protestors at Birmingham, Alabama in 1963.⁴¹ Soviet broadcastings questioned US claims to leadership of the free world and its aloof stance on racism in America as indicative of its policies towards coloured people throughout the world.⁴² It for that matter suggested that racism can only be eradicated along with capitalism itself.⁴³

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 saw the US emerge as the global hegemon in a unipolar international system, with a greater part of the world falling under its socio-cultural, politico-economic and military sway. Collins et al., argued that the US ability to keep other countries in line with its interest is in large part gained through persuasion than coercion.⁴⁴ On the contrary, Bruce Jentleson is of the view that coercive diplomacy has rather played a significant role in keeping other states in line with US interest.⁴⁵ What stands undeniable is that the US is now responsible for more than one-third of the global economy.⁴⁶ Also, the fall of its chief rival saw the world gravitating towards the US world view, that by embracing capitalist market economies and liberal democracy, the 'have-nots' will be able to join the 'haves' as developed nations. Today, most states have their market sectors dominated by multinational companies often used by the US in enforcing economic sanctions on states at variance with its foreign interests and policies. In consonance with Gramscian concept of hegemony, the US by controlling the means of production, capital and perception management in the form of media influence, has been able to consolidate its hegemonic position.⁴⁷

The global dominance of the US is evident in its superintendence of a world order sanctioned by it and yet unaccountable to it since it's by itself the world order embodied. It has taken a leading role in all realms of international relations from threatening sanctions against the ICC should it investigate war crimes allegedly committed by the US in Afghanistan⁴⁸ to using international agencies in sole pursuit of its interest when it suits its interest.⁴⁹ It has by itself assumed the role of a global judge and policeman in determining what wrong ought to be punished and what wrong ought to be overlooked if not justified. The Arab spring which obtained the blessings of the US and its western allies in form of military and financial support, was eventually truncated when the spring made its way to Riyadh. Unlike those in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria among others, the violent repression of the peaceful protests in Saudi Arabia and the executions, particularly of the nonviolent civil rights activist and Shia cleric, Sheik Nimr, were underreported.

Also, the comparative study of two incidents that made headlines in 2018 which exposes the hypocrisy of western governments and mainstream media are the cases of Sergei Skripal and Jamal Khashoggi. The alleged Russian poisoning of Sergei Skripal (Russian double agent for UK's intelligent services) was swiftly followed by condemnations and sanctions by western governments amidst little to no substantial evidence of the Russian state involvement.⁵⁰ However, the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi (Saudi dissident and journalist) in a Saudi consulate in Istanbul, a more provable case of murder, was treated with caution and restraint by the western allies.⁵¹ Besides having failed to respond to the Magnitsky Act invoked by US senators which required the president to determine if Saudi Crown Prince Salman was responsible for ordering Khashoggi's murder, the White House casted doubt on CIA intelligence

assessment which pointed a finger at the Saudi Crown Prince.⁵² Instead, the mainstream media as led by the CNN questioned Russia's silence on the Saudi implicated murder.⁵³ It took Trumps inadvertent justification for inaction on the basis of not jeopardising US trade relations with Saudi Arabia "over the death of one journalist"⁵⁴ to expose its agenda of commerce over humanity. The transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, World War I, World War II, the cold war and the post 9/11 era, points to commerce and conquest as the preeminent complementary force in inter-state relations. The concept of conquest or imperialism is no longer strictly associated with the traditional notion of territorial expansion, but the ability to exert influence over states and shape the perception of the populace in support of the hegemon.

As reinforced by Hans Morgenthau, whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim.⁵⁵ Alex Hybel further noted that politics is about interests, but interests are rooted in beliefs and principles.⁵⁶ In essence, values, principles and beliefs are often used as mere conduits in advancing a covert, often unspoken or sinister objective and not necessarily or purely driven by the need to uphold the expressed values. This best explains why the US, its western allies and mainstream media downplayed the shooting of protestors by the Saudi⁵⁷ and Israeli⁵⁸ authorities, while financing and arming putschists in Libya and Syria, and labelling them as moderate rebels.⁵⁹ The role of the US as the leading enforcer of the global capitalist order is indisputable. According to Gompert and Binnendijk, globalisation of trade and investment offers the US promising coercive options against adversaries that rely on access to such markets and systems.⁶⁰ This is usually to strangle the adversary and limiting its financial capacity to provide basic needs for its citizenry, hence precipitating rebellion from within. In situations where soft coercive options may be deemed time consuming or ineffective, the corporate media may be

marshalled in discrediting the adversary as illegitimate, thus legitimising any military overthrow that may ensue. According to Carey, corporate propaganda is been utilised to shield corporate power from the supposed threats of democracy.⁶¹ Similarly, Rowell observed that the democratic process has been corrupted by corporations fuelling ‘independent’ think-tanks, lying and buying politicians in the name of profit.⁶² Corporate media therefore tends to employ propaganda to justify the use of violence as a necessary evil when diplomacy has not been fully exhausted. An issue of consent manufactured by media propaganda and coercion by military force, hence the hegemonic principle of consent armoured with coercion. The 2010 Arab spring has heralded an era where ‘humanitarian intervention’ has assumed the same character as ‘war on terror’ in justification of unjust wars. The greatest battle still remains of the mind with the media as the battlefield.

2.3 The Concept of Peace Media

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”⁶³ As such, the role of peace education in conflict transformation through the media cannot be underestimated. The incessant mass media reporting and framing of conflicts has adversely impacted public perceptions of war. Research shows that conflict reporting is often typified by media sensationalism and identification with one side of a conflict.⁶⁴ The mainstream media has over the years portrayed violence/aggression as one of the prime foreign policy instruments in peace restoration.⁶⁵ The need to deconstruct such thinking has become more vital to renewing the interest in, and resort to an open and constructive dialogue as the progressive path to a lasting peace. Peace media as a concept can be traced to the 1920s when Harold Laswell⁶⁶ and Walter Lippmann⁶⁷ postulated that, once the media had been potent in persuading

the public in support of war, then they bear the same potency in persuading the public to support desired social advancements. However, the concept of peace media gained momentum in the early 90s in response to the new wave of propaganda employed in escalating ethnic tensions in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia.

Peace media, alternatively termed peace journalism, is the type of media and related practices which “creates avenues for society to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict”.⁶⁸ In contrast to war media which is likened to sports journalism as pertains to a win or lose affair, peace media is likened to health journalism. In the sense that, a good health correspondent, not only describes the cancerous cells eating away at a patient’s body, but also highlights the causes, possible remedies and preventive measures.⁶⁹ This, one may be inclined to term a solutions-oriented journalism/media, which primarily employs a preventive or conciliatory approach to conflict.

Galtung suggested peace/conflict, truth, people and solutions as the principal orientations of peace journalism, as opposed to war/conflict, propaganda, elites and victory orientations associated with war journalism.⁷⁰ If Galtung’s peace and war media orientations are anything to go by, then it necessarily follows that the general public be considered averse to war, whereas the elites, arguably less opposed to war. Lending credence to the above, Hermann Goring noted that the common people detest war, and that by creating the impression that they are under attack or threat of attack, the elite drag them into it, irrespective of the system of government in place.⁷¹ In what appears to be a slight deviation from the latter part of Goring’s observation, Noam Chomsky points out that violence is to dictatorship what propaganda is to democracy.⁷² It has

however become more apparent that no other country has presently mastered the art of propaganda side by side the use of force, or violence if you like, as its prime foreign policy instrument than the chief crusader of democracy, the US.

Table 2.1: Peace media and its relation to conflict situations

Conflict Phases	Intervention Goal	War Media 1	War Media 2	Peace Media	Outcome
Onset	Prevention	No coverage of tensions: risks sending a signal that violence is the only means to draw attention.	Reports, but frames tensions as bloodbath in the making. Risks inflaming fear/mistrust, thus heightening partisan inclinations. Covers up “our” untruths & expose “their” untruths	Presents causes of conflict and offers preventive measures. Fosters dialogue, giving voice to peace makers on all sides. Also exposes untruths on all sides.	Hostility
Escalation	Management	Report on Massacre (RoM): May ignore the violence or blazon it as an atrocity which demands an urgent action likely to turn the tide in the conflict/battle/war		RoM: States source of report, finds witnesses besides main source, & enquires if any investigation is	Violence

			ongoing in order to ascertain the veracity of reports.	
		Broadcast extreme statements from both sides	Presents the stated positions and demands of disputing parties	Objective and systematic mapping of conflict. Opens dialogue for creative solutions
De-escalation	Resolution	Report favours one side's peace proposal as the ultimate solution	Explore peace initiatives, ascertains the extent to which the proposal is acceptable to all parties, addresses rehabilitation & reconciliation	Ceasefire
Termination	Reconciliation	Reports are characterised by normalisation of relations between previously demonised party & media favoured party. From the "regime" or "dictator" to "president" or "government" of country 'x' //or// attempts may be made to put the newly installed party in a positive light while attributing its failures to the previous administration	Peace education	Negative Peace: absence of violence Positive Peace: transformation of psychological barriers to restoration of relations

Source: Adapted from Gilboa (2007) and; McGoldrick & Lynch (2000)

Like other concepts and theories, the peace media concept has attracted a barrage of criticisms questioning its approach to conflict, albeit its conspicuously well-intended motives. Hanitzsch critiqued the peace media concept on the issue of “objectivity”.⁷³ He argued that if peace media as understood by him meant the non-coverage of violence, then the objectivity of such media outlet is dubious. But then, Galtung in his conceptualisation of peace media underscored the relevance of reporting untruths on all sides of a conflict in contrast to giving greater focus to violence.⁷⁴ Hanitzsch criticism may therefore be considered unfounded. Then again, giving greater voice to peace-makers on both sides and less coverage to extreme statements from disputing parties, is more a matter of ethics.

Scholars like Lynch also view peace media’s attempt to detail the causes of conflict or violence as effort to justify violence and advocates that violence or terrorism be dealt with an iron fist.⁷⁵ In other words, elucidating the underlying cause of violence is analogous to justifying it. The irony lies in the fact that, a counter-offensive or military operations to enforce or safeguard peace equally require explanations or justifications. As noted of the distinction between a freedom fighter and a terrorist in chapter one, violence or terrorism is similarly a matter of interest and perception. In a situation where the mainstream media effectively linked the motivations of the 9/11 attackers to Islamic fundamentalism, peace media would have avoided igniting the flames of islamophobia by rather addressing the political motivations. As succinctly put by Glain, “However inexcusable the attacks were, Osama bin Laden found them neither unprovoked nor inspired by radical interpretation of Islam, but by America’s Middle East policies.”⁷⁶ It is also worth noting, that the US and its western allies once hailed the efforts of the same mujahideen in

their fight against then Soviet Union in Afghanistan. But all these, hinges on context, interest and perception.

More so, the persecution of whistle blowers like Bradley Manning and the calls for extradition of Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, lends to the view that not all truths are allowed by the powers that be, for publication, as much as some violence are deemed legitimate. As rightly put by Whitaker, “terrorism is violence by those we disapprove of.”⁷⁷ Contrary to the criticisms levelled against peace media, its main aim is to objectively cover events, bearing in mind media ethics, and to explain conflict or violence as a means to unravelling the path to a lasting conflict resolution and not necessarily to justify violence, as mistakenly held by Lynch.

2.4 Brief overview of the 2002 Venezuelan crisis

Widespread corruption, economic turmoil, popular protest against neoliberal policies and subsequent massacre of civilians (caracazo), fuelled general discontent against the presidency of Carlos Andres Perez. This in turn gave momentum to the 4th February and 27th November 1992 foiled coups by the Lt. Col. Hugo Chavez led Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200 (MBR-200). By taking full responsibility and asserting that the defeat was temporal, in a brief televised speech following his arrest, Chavez meteoric rise to national prominence was birthed.⁷⁸

Having received amnesty from President Rafael Caldera, he joined the electoral train which led him to a decisive victory in the 1998 presidential elections. The popularity of his new constitution’s social agenda, significantly contributed to his re-election in 2002. His radical social welfare programmes and prospects of further deepening his Bolivarian missions,

exasperated the traditional elites and middle-class Venezuelans who had profited from the old order.⁷⁹ To safeguard their economic interest, the elite controlled private media which dominated the media landscape, was arrayed against the government and policies of Chavez. It played a pivotal role in the orchestration of a short-lived 48-hour coup, which captured global attention and stirred international debate.

2.4.1 Political History of Venezuela

On the north western coast of South America is the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Proximately adjoined from the west to the north-east by Colombia, Brazil, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, respectively. Touched by the wave of exploration and exploitation, colonisation of the territory commenced in 1521 by Spain.⁸⁰ This was amidst resistance by the indigenes. The Spanish intruders subjugated the natives along the coastal belt and in later years made inroads, farther into the hinterland where they faced stiffer resistance in the 1750s. It was around this time that the invaders heightened their import of enslaved Africans to work on the cocoa plantations along the coast of Venezuela. It is nonetheless worth noting, that slavery was introduced in the area in 1632, as influenced by the opening of gold mines at Yaracuy.⁸¹

On the 5th of July 1811, independence was declared under the leadership of Francisco de Miranda. It was the news of Napoleons invasion of Spain that emboldened the revolutionaries. They for that matter resorted to war as a means to make good on their independence declaration. The first republic was short-lived as the royalists reversed the independence gains of the revolutionaries in 1812. Having perceived Miranda's capitulation and attempt to flee as a treasonable act, his notable compatriot, Simon Bolivar, had him arrested and handed over to their

arch-enemy. In 1813, the revolutionaries established the second republic following the successful military campaign led by Simon Bolivar. This too was short-lived, given the counter-offensive by Jose Boves, a brutal royalist infamous for his vicious treatment of the sympathisers of Venezuelan independence. The cessation of Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1814, made possible the dispatch of an expeditionary force led by General Pablo Morillo, to recover territories lost to the revolutionaries.⁸² Alongside his onetime trusted and abled comrade-in-arms, Simon Bolivar joined forces with Jose Paez in resisting the expeditionary force which resulted in a stalemate. This gave Bolivar the breathing space to re-establish the third republic in 1817.

Under the leadership of Bolivar, Venezuela was amalgamated with New Granada to form the republic of Gran Colombia at the Congress of Angostura in 1819. The newly proclaimed republic covered Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador and parts of Brazil, Guyana and Peru.⁸³ However, it was the decisive victory won at the battle of Carabobo on the 24th June, 1821 that solidified the independence and sovereignty of the republic. It was during this battle that Pedro Camejo (Negro Primero), the most celebrated Afro-Venezuelan independence hero, is reported to have died in action.⁸⁴ Simon Bolivar's mission of a united Latin America was betrayed by a rebellion led by none other than his onetime trusted comrade, Jose Paez, who declared Venezuela independent following its secession from Gran Colombia in 1830.

Between the 1908-1935 period, the unearthing of huge oil reserves ushered Venezuela into the limelight as the world's leading oil exporter. This development occurred under the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gomez who profited immensely from the corruption that thrived thereof. The oil boom launched the country from relative anonymity to a mecca for foreign oil companies and

dominant global actors. Eleazar Contreras assumed power upon the demise of Gomez in 1935. His 1935-1941 regime was generally marked by continuation of dictatorship. Contreras was succeeded by Isaias Angarita in 1941. Angarita's regime was noted for its 1943 Hydrocarbon Law which required oil companies to pay 50% of their profits to the state. In 1945, Angarita was ousted from power, and for the first time, a democratically elected president assumed office in 1947. In less than eight months in office, the democratically elected president Romulo Gallegos was ousted by Major Marcos Perez Jimenez.⁸⁵ After the latter's ouster in 1958, a tripartite agreement known as the Puntofijo Pact was reached by the country's three major political parties. The pact became a power sharing agreement which saw power passing from Romulo Betancourt (1959-64); Raul Otero (1964-69) both of the Democratic Action party (AD), Rafael Caldera (1969-74) of the Christian Democratic Party (COPEI), Carlos Andres Perez (1974-79) of DA, Luis Herrera Campins (1978-84) of COPEI, Jaime Lusinchi (1984-89) of DA and second return of Perez (1989-93).

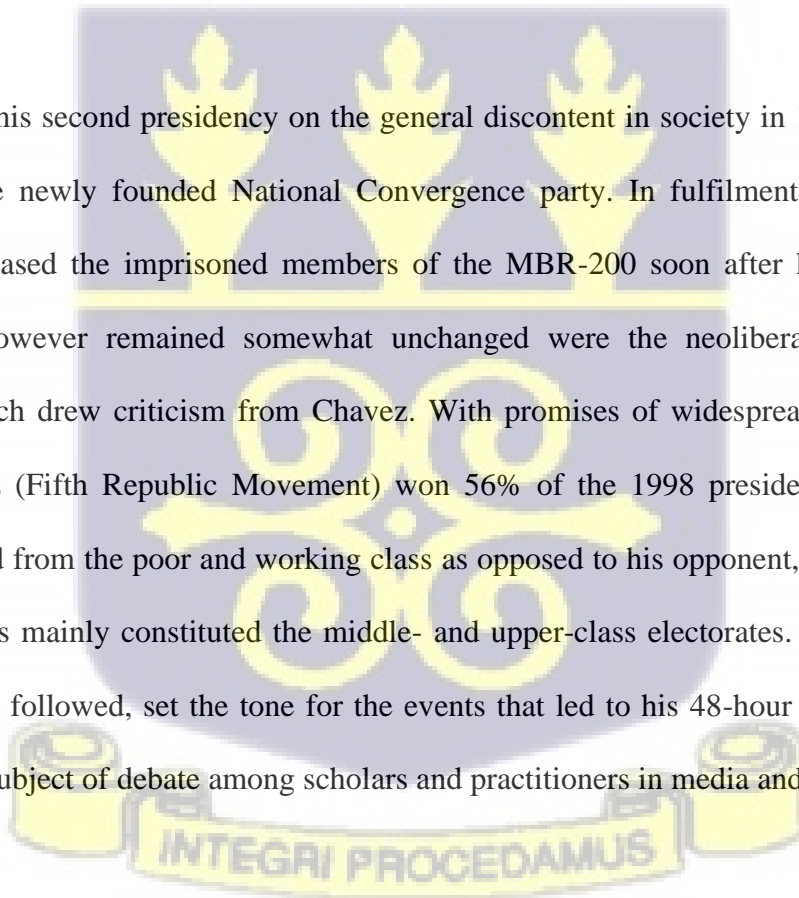
The presidency of Carlos Andres Perez (1974-79) was characterised by a rapid rise and decline in economic prosperity. With the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and its attendant Arab oil embargo, Venezuela capitalised on the conflict to triple its oil prices. In 1976, Perez nationalised the country's oil industry which necessitated the birth of the state-owned petroleum company, PVDSA. Poor economic management, corruption and the plummeting of oil prices crippled Venezuela's economy. This led to his party's loss to the Christian Democratic Party's Luis Herrera, in the 1978 presidential elections. Devaluation of currency did not mitigate the economic crisis inherited by Herrera. It in fact heightened during the administration of his successor, Jaime Lusinchi, whom he handed power to in 1984.

In 1989, Perez was once again elected into office amidst economic turmoil. He had in his election campaign denounced the Bretton Woods Institutions and their neoliberal agenda. In his assumption to power, he immediately kowtowed to the demands of the IMF by embracing the Washington consensus in return for a loan. The government's implementation of the austerity measures prescribed by the IMF was far from welcomed by the populace. The straw that broke the camel's back was the removal of government subsidy on oil prices which eventuated in 100% increment in public transportation fares. It precipitated a series of protests and looting across the country which came to be known as "Caracazo" meaning "Caracas Smash". The government's heavy-handed response was manifest in its brutal repression via forced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings.⁸⁶

Disenchanted with the Puntofijo Pact, a quasi-democratic system with power moving from one hand to the other hand of the same body of a corrupt clientelist establishment, Hugo Chavez formed MBR-200 in 1982.⁸⁷ A military revolutionary movement which begun as a political study group started to hatch a coup. The long-awaited opportunity came during the Caracazo in 1989, but the MBR-200 was taken by surprise, hence unprepared to have capitalised on the event. On the 4th of February, 1992, Chavez attempted coup was foiled amidst betrayals, minor defections and miscalculations, albeit the success of his collaborators in other parts of the country. He eventually gave himself up to the authorities and appealed that he be granted the opportunity to call on his comrades via national television, in order to cease the bloodshed.

Chavez took advantage of the Tv broadcast to take responsibility for the rebellion. He famously quipped that the failure was only temporal. His actions and broadcasted utterance catapulted him into the national spotlight as a voice of the suffering masses. His imprisonment did not deter the second coup which took place barely nine months after the first attempted overthrow. Just like the first, the second coup was foiled. Ex-president Rafael Caldera took advantage of the attempted coups coupled with the unpopularity of the neoliberal policies of president Perez, to rally the opposition against the incumbent. The charges of embezzlement brought against the president by the Attorney General and the subsequent stripping of presidential immunity, culminated in the eventual removal of Perez from office in August 1993.

Caldera rode to his second presidency on the general discontent in society in 1994, this time on the ticket of the newly founded National Convergence party. In fulfilment of his campaign promise, he released the imprisoned members of the MBR-200 soon after his assumption to power. What however remained somewhat unchanged were the neoliberal policies of his predecessor which drew criticism from Chavez. With promises of widespread socio-economic reforms, Chavez (Fifth Republic Movement) won 56% of the 1998 presidential votes which largely emanated from the poor and working class as opposed to his opponent, Henrique Romer, whose supporters mainly constituted the middle- and upper-class electorates. His inauguration and policies that followed, set the tone for the events that led to his 48-hour overthrow, which has remained a subject of debate among scholars and practitioners in media and conflict studies.



2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reported on the issue of intra-state conflicts across the globe. The chapter as well delved into the nature of Intra-State power struggle, the use of propaganda in international politics, the concept of peace media, the political history of Venezuela, and an overview of the 2002 Venezuelan crisis. The chapter established that propaganda has since centuries been resorted to as a means to either legitimize or demonise an ideology, a course of action or entity. The advent of the mass media has further widened the audience reach, hence employed as an effective tool for information and misinformation purposes, as suits the interest of the sending entity. It was also observed that the media played an instrumental role in the 2002 Venezuelan crisis.



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CHAPTER THREE

THE 2002 VENEZUELAN CRISIS AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is purposely structured to examine the 2002 Venezuelan crisis as well as the domestic and foreign policies of Chavez that to a certain degree gave life to the crisis in question. It further takes into account the media's framing of events leading to the crisis and the government's measures to counter private media hegemony.

3.1 Chavez' Policies at the Domestic Level

Barely 25 days after his assumption of office on 2nd February, 1999, President Hugo Chavez launched Plan Bolivar 2000. Considered the first of his Bolivarian Missions, the programme coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Caracazo. It largely enlisted the service of an estimated forty-thousand soldiers in its implementation.¹ In an unclassified document by the CIA, the programme is reported to have entailed taking a census of the unemployed, provision of medical care and food to the neediest, renovation of roads, schools, hospitals and houses, clean-up exercises and so forth.² By the climax of the programme, over two-million people had received medical treatment and the renovation of homes, schools, hospitals and churches were in the thousands. It was generally deemed a success across the country. It was however alleged that the programme was fraught with corruption and financial irregularities on the part of some officers in charge of the plan. Some critics also argued that the use of military personnel in the programme was needless and inappropriate since the main purpose of the army was national defence and not poverty reduction.³

Chavez rode on a campaign promise of a new constitution as an element central to his agenda to transform Venezuela. This he claimed was to break the traditional parties' stranglehold on public institutions. True to this promise, he called for the nation's first public referendum in just two months in office. In April 1999, an overwhelming (72%) majority of Venezuelans approved the president's proposal to draft a new constitution. On the 25th of July that same year, Chavez's party won 120 of the 131 seats in the Constitutional Assembly. The new constitution came into effect in December after its ratification by the electorate with a 72% approval rate.⁴ The constitution not only honoured Simon Bolivar by changing the name of the country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, but also dealt a crippling blow to the old order. It made provisions for an unprecedented recall referendum where electorates could call for a vote to remove elected representatives, including the president, should they succeed collecting enough signatures (20% of voters) on petitions.⁵ This very same provision was used by opposition in their failed call for a vote to remove Chavez in 2004, given its disapproval by majority (59%) of the electorates. The presidential term was also extended from five to six years, with the president allowed to run two terms in succession, subject to re-election.

The new constitution transformed the National Assembly from a bicameral legislature to a unicameral legislature. Labour and social security benefits were also extended in addition to safeguarding the rights of the indigenous people. Much to the dismay of his detractors, the constitution forbade the privatisation of the oil industry.⁶ The opposition viewed the constitutional reform as an act of consolidating Chavez's powers and a harbinger of authoritarian rule. What they however failed to acknowledge was that, Chavez's approach was truncating the benefits they derived from the elite-oriented and corrupt system, deeply entrenched by the over

four decades pacted-democracy of Puntofijismo. Any attempt therefore, that sought to dramatically change the status-quo, naturally drew the few but powerful beneficiaries of the old order in confrontation with the numerically advantaged supporters of Chavez.

As required by the new constitution, elections were to be held to re-legitimise the government. Accordingly, elections were organised in July 2000 which heralded another electoral victory for Chavez, obtaining 60% of votes cast. In December that year, the principal labour union, Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), was enraged by Chavez's decision to enforce a law that required of them to hold state-monitored elections. Despite admitting to Chavez's allegation of corruption in the union, the labour leaders were reluctant to welcome state interference.⁷ This move by Chavez attracted condemnation by international labour groups. This was in face of the fact that CVT had hitherto never held direct elections, which in essence drew its legitimacy as the institutional representation of Venezuelan workers, into disrepute. It had also for long kowtowed to the Puntofijismo system, thus subordinating the rights of workers to clientelist politics while complicit in ex-president Perez's implementation of the unpopular neoliberal programmes.⁸

In 2001, CVT was compelled to hold elections. The election was characterised by low voter turnout of between 30-50%, electoral fraud and allegations of corruption. Notwithstanding the Supreme Court's refusal to recognise the results, the leader of the influential oil workers union and alleged victor of the elections, Carlos Ortega, assumed the presidency and commenced an aggressive anti-Chavez campaign.⁹ In June, Chavez relaunched the MBR-200 as the "Bolivarian circles". Based loosely on the initial study circles he instituted when he began his conspiracy in

the army, the circles constituted small groups of neighbours who studied the constitution, ran job training programmes, cleaned the streets and conducted literacy classes. He found in the circles a way by which to promote participatory democracy as opposed to representative democracy, and a means of organising his largely disorganised following. The media portrayed them as armed and violent men of Chavez's revolution, and likened them to Castro's Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. Some of them were armed, but so were members of the middle and upper classes.¹⁰

As had been granted to presidents preceding him, Chavez was granted an Enabling Act which saw him enact 49 decrees in November 2001.¹¹ The most controversial of the decrees that precipitated the protests leading to the 48-hour overthrow, were, Mission Zamora and the Hydrocarbons Law.

Approximately eighty percent of privately-owned land was reported to be owned by five percent of the population, with less than three percent owning sixty percent of arable land.¹² The urbanisation that followed oil discovery resulted in the overburdening of public services in the slums of the capital and other cities. The land redistribution programme named Mission Zamora was to correct the disparity in land ownership, disincentivise urbanisation and stimulate agricultural production - given the nation's heavy dependency on food import. The programme therefore entailed the expropriation of uncultivated and idle government and private lands, with the latter being compensated at prevailing market rates for their land.¹³ The opposition resented the programme and as such embarked on a media campaign against the move, mainly contending that lands for redistribution should solely come from the state, since it is the largest land owner.¹⁴

More controversial was the new hydrocarbons law which faced much stiffer opposition. It required the state-owned petroleum company (PDVSA) to hold not less than fifty-one percent stake in any new joint venture with foreign oil companies. The law also raised the minimum royalty rate from 1% to 30%.¹⁵ This was to increase state revenues in the bid to facilitate the implementation of the government's social support programmes. Admittedly, the Enabling Act which paved way for the decree of the Hydrocarbons law, was passed by a democratically elected constituent assembly within the parameters of constitutional procedures.¹⁶

Following a series of strikes, the elite veteran elements of PDVSA shut the state oil company on the 5th April, 2002. In the following two days, the CTV under the disputed leadership of Carlos Ortega, and the state's main union of business owners (Fedecamaras) headed by Pedro Carmona, respectively declared a general strike beginning 9th of April, in solidarity with PDVSA protestors. This culminated in the failed attempt to oust President Chavez on the 11th of April, 2002.¹⁷

In stark contrast to the neoliberal agenda of the Washington consensus, Chavez emphasized that his policies evolved around these goals: i. Venezuela will exercise absolute sovereignty and not bow to imperialistic pressures; ii. Promotion of grassroots participation (thus making a constitutional provision for presidential recalls); iii. Encouragement of local production of consumer goods and food needs to promote economic self-sufficiency; iv. Equitable distribution of oil revenue; v. Elimination of corruption; and vi. Elimination of Puntofijismo (two party system that excluded other parties from the presidency).¹⁸

3.2 Foreign Policies of Chavez

It needs to be pointed out that Chavez had been in office for barely three-years prior the attempted coup that sought to oust him. His first year in office had been centred on drafting the new constitution and other social-welfare programmes leading to the 30th July 2000 presidential election, as necessitated by the new constitution. In other words, his detractors, both foreign and domestic, had offered him less than two years in his second term to orchestrate their foiled coup on 11th April, 2002.

Just a month in office as at March 1999, Chavez's Minister of Energy, Ali Rodriguez, had under his directive succeeded in persuading Saudi Arabia and Mexico to cut down on their oil production, by two million barrels a day.¹⁹ This agreement incentivised other members of OPEC to follow suit. In August of that same year, Chavez toured all the member countries of OPEC to personally invite them to the organisation's second summit in Caracas, twenty-five years after its first. By one year, Chavez had reinvigorated OPEC, with members conforming to production quotas. Petroleum prices had also risen from \$10 per barrel to \$30 per barrel.²⁰ It gave Venezuela a windfall of \$4.5 billion with export surging by 33%, a dollar equivalence of 16 billion. Chavez took advantage of the situation to enhance the nation's economic stabilisation fund, by way of saving money when oil prices rise and falling back on it when prices plunge.²¹ This was at a time when protests over oil prices were sweeping across Europe.²²

It is worth mentioning that Washington did not wish to see a Chavez presidency in Caracas. This was evident in the fact that the US on the advice of ambassador John Maisto, denied Chavez a visa on his pre-election intended trip to the US. This they based on his earlier involvement to

oust a constitutional government.²³ Given that CIA declassified documents reveal US sponsorship of coups in foreign nations, one can only conjecture that Washington's decision was mainly informed by the threat Chavez was perceived to have posed to US politico-economic interest. Chavez had during his presidential campaign promised to reverse the 1996 opening of the oil sector to foreign investors. This raised concern among US oil companies in Venezuela (such as Mobil, Texaco and Phillips).²⁴

In the aftermath of Chavez's electoral victory in December 1998, the US swiftly reversed its course by inviting then President-elect Chavez to meet President Clinton on 27th January 1999, barely five days to his inauguration. While in Washington, he assured the US that he was not a dictator-in-waiting but a committed democrat looking forward to a mutually beneficial relation between both nations.²⁵ Notwithstanding the reversion of course by the US, Miraflores and Washington had their relations shrouded in suspicion. Following the deadly December 1999 floods, the US offered Venezuela over \$8 million in aid through USAID. At the request of the Venezuelan Defence Minister, the US, in mid-January 2000, sent two Navy ships with engineers, purposed to reconstruct a vital coastal road destroyed by the flooding. Chavez later rejected the offer on the grounds of sovereignty, so much to the chagrin of US officials.²⁶

In February 2000, the strain in the US-Venezuelan relations resurfaced when US officials voiced concerns about OPEC engineered oil price increment under the sway of Chavez. On a counter-campaign mission in opposition to the one carried out by Ali Rodriguez (Chavez's Minister of Energy), Bill Richardson, the US secretary of Energy, toured friendly OPEC member states to convince them to increase oil production.²⁷ Contrary to the oil policy of Chavez, PDVSA's

president endorsed the US campaign calling for OPEC's increase in oil supply.²⁸ Despite opposition to his oil policy, even the US in its Congressional Research Service Report, acknowledged the revenue gains made by the Chavez led administration.²⁹

In August 2000, Chavez toured all OPEC member states to personally invite them to the second summit in OPEC's history. This was to rally OPEC member states in defence of what he termed "a fair price" for oil.³⁰ One particular visit of his that infuriated the US was his meeting with Iraq's Saddam Hussein. The US claimed to have found it rather distasteful for a democratically elected president to grace the soil of a UN sanctioned dictatorial regime. The US and international media did not hold back on their scathing criticisms hurled at Chavez for his visit. His critics at home were unperturbed by his visit to Iraq. As one of such fierce critics, Teodoro Petkoff, a newspaper editor noted, "the visit is no issue to Venezuelans, it has assumed an abominable international dimension only because the US deems it so".³¹ His supporters however accused the US of double standards given its cordial relations with brutal regimes such as those of Chile's Pinochet and Somozas' in Nicaragua, when it suited US interests.³²

At the September 2000 dated OPEC summit held in Caracas, the delegates applauded as Chavez questioned what the industrialised nations could do without oil and where they would be without it. They nodded approvingly to his price comparisons of a barrel of Coca-Cola and other consumer goods with oil. President Chavez had earlier suggested that the industrialised nations could as well lower the prices of the goods they sell to Venezuela, naming computers, interest on foreign debt and so forth.³³

Just a month after the summit, Chavez gave Castro a hero's welcome into Venezuela. Not only did the visit seem to have contravened US wishes but also undermined its trade embargo on Cuba via the trade deals between the two.³⁴ Chavez had also met Gaddafi whose system of governance he praised as a model of participatory democracy.³⁵ Chavez's refusal to allow US use its airspace on its counter-narcotics operations in Colombia, gained him a US 'conferred' label of a "negative force" in the region.³⁶

The incident that however marked a turning point in the US-Venezuela relations was Chavez's denunciation of US war on terror in Afghanistan. This was against the backdrop of the 2001 September 11th terrorist attacks on the US. Chavez had two days after the attacks condemned it and held a minute of silence in commemoration of the victims. In less than two weeks after the terrorist attacks, he urged the US not to start the "first war of the 21st century" and appealed to world leaders to focus on the causes of terrorism rather than merely hunting down terrorists.³⁷ On 7th October 2001, the US commenced its bombardment of Afghanistan, since the Taliban adamantly refused to hand over the alleged brain behind the attack, Osama bin Laden. On 29th October, Chavez, in a televised speech rebuked the US for the civilian collateral damage inflicted by its bombardments. While displaying grisly pictures of dead Afghanistan children to the cameras, he labelled the US operation a "slaughter of innocents" while noting that the unguided reprisal attacks, just as the terrorist attacks, had no justification.³⁸

The US was enraged as Chavez had violated Washington's doctrine of "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists". There was no neutral ground, and to President Bush, Chavez had trespassed the red line. Ambassador Donna Hrinak was immediately recalled to Washington

where an interagency review of US-Venezuela relations was convened. On her return to Caracas, she was granted an audience with Chavez. In the course of reading the letter from Washington to Chavez, she was interrupted by him, according to Chavez's own account, when she asked that he publicly retract his statements on the US operations in Afghanistan.³⁹ He reminded her of her place as an ambassador in a sovereign country of which he leads, with a request that she immediately leave his office.⁴⁰

The conspiratorial activities heightened. A parade of opposition Venezuelan media persons, business men, politicians and military officers begun passing through Washington and the US embassy in Caracas. In November 2001, Pedro Carmona and other leading Venezuelan business figures met Otto Reich, the US Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs and John Maisto who had predicted that Chavez's presidency would not last two years. Their meeting was to allegedly deliberate on the impending coup.⁴¹ Reich accused Chavez of interfering in the operations of PDVSA and going to the rescue of Cuba with preferential prices on oil.⁴²

Alongside the quiet meetings with Chavez's critics, the US is reported to have funded opposition organisations such as the Assembly of Education run by Leonardo Carvajal to prop up their campaign against Chavez. The financing was carried out through the US government's National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Meanwhile, Allen Weinstein, NED's first president, had in an earlier interview with the Washington Post admitted that the body's activities were functions covertly undertaken by the CIA years ago.⁴³ President Bush had also appointed Elliot Abrams into the National Security Council in charge of the 'promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide. This was a man who was involved in war crimes and human rights abuses in Central

America during the 1980s and who also pleaded guilty to two misdemeanour counts of misleading Congress.⁴⁴

In February 2002, George Tenet, the CIA director, in his testimony to the Senate categorically acknowledged that Venezuela was of interest to the US, more especially since it's the "third largest supplier of petroleum with a leader who has no US interest at heart."⁴⁵ Just three weeks before the 11th April 2002 coup, Charles Shapiro took his seat as the new US ambassador to Venezuela. On the first weekend at post, he met a delegation of Chavez's opposition groups who took part in the attempted overthrow albeit denying active US involvement.⁴⁶

3.3 Constructing the Political Crisis

At the time of Chavez's ascendance to the presidency in 1999, 88% of the television stations and 100% of all newspapers, were owned and controlled by wealthy families with links to the erstwhile political order, international media and financial corporations.⁴⁷ The Puntofijismo system had over the years entrenched a corrupt system which widened the economic disparities between the rich and the poor. As a result, 80% of Venezuela's 23 million population had been condemned to poverty.⁴⁸ The beneficiaries of the old order were neither swayed by the pacted-democracy nor the anti-neoliberal rhetoric that featured the pre-election campaigns of Carlos Perez and Rafael Caldera. On assumption of office, they both acted contrary to their pre-election anti-neoliberal position. Similar to those of his predecessors, Chavez's pre-election anti-neoliberal rhetoric, was taken with a pinch of salt and perceived as a no real threat to the vested interest of the elites. To them, Chavez was perhaps another demagogue whom they could easily co-opt upon assuming power.⁴⁹

The media hostility towards Chavez's government gained overt momentum when he decided to make good on his campaign promise of a constitutional reform, just two months in office. But Chavez understood the power of the media as evidenced by his 1992 request for airtime, to supposedly ask his co-conspirators to capitulate, which he did. But then again, in less than 90 seconds, he literally gave a leadership face to the hitherto leaderless public resistance against Perez's austerity measures. This must have partly informed his post-electoral victory decision to launch *Alo Presidente* (Hello President) which aired every Sunday. The programme was the centrepiece of his media and communication strategy. It was a live phone-in broadcast, which as never before, enabled the Venezuelan masses to have their grievances addressed and views taken into consideration by a sitting president. Chavez used the platform to also inaugurate factories, detail his policies, recount personal memories and the like.

Described by Chavez as the "four horsemen of the apocalypse" the four leading television networks that played an instrumental role in orchestrating the coup were Venevision, Globovision, Televen and RCTV. The owner of Venevision, Gustavo Cisneros, a close friend to the Bush family, had been an indefatigable proselytizer of the Washington Consensus.⁵⁰ In a 1999 profile in *Latin CEO* magazine, he declared that Latin America was entirely committed to free trade.⁵¹ This was nothing short of a false advertisement to advocates of global capitalism, especially not in an era when Argentina's economic implosion was attributed to the Washington Consensus, amidst resurgence of the "Pink Tide". Generally, the few wealthy Venezuelans of European descent had a vested interest in preserving their long-standing privileged position. Chavez's constitutional reform and other leftist policies placed him and the traditional ruling elite at opposing ends of the political spectrum.

The media atmosphere leading to the 11th April political crisis, was characterised by antagonism between the pro-Chavez state-owned media and a plethora of an elite controlled private media. The latter never hesitated referring to Chavez as an “order-giving monkey”, a Zambo (mixed African and indigenous Indian blood) leading other monkeys.⁵² Chavez in response described his detractors as “rancid oligarchs and squealing pigs”.⁵³ Such rhetoric further polarised the nation along racial and class lines. In view of the aggressive media campaign against his presidency, Chavez advised his appointees to counteract the opposition’s propaganda, with his administration’s achievements and poverty alleviation initiatives. Under a leader whom they labelled a “totalitarian fascist dictator”, the private media, for the first time in the nation’s history, questioned the sanity of the president with impunity.⁵⁴ A president who had won not less than three elections deemed credible by the Carter Centre Observer Missions.⁵⁵

As intimated earlier, the hostility came to a head with the passing of the hydrocarbons law. In opposition to the law, were the old guards at the helm of the state oil company, in collusion with the nation’s elite; and in this, they coincided with the strategic interest of the US. As a result, the media inflamed the opposition’s 10th December strike with anti-government sentiments, an act unthinkable in the US or Europe.⁵⁶ On the 5th April, 2002, the management of PDVSA closed the state’s oil company. In solidarity with the PDVSA protestors, CTV in an unnatural league with FEDECAMERAS declared a 24-hour strike slated for 9th April. With the impending strike in sight, Chavez publicly dismissed the seven-member management board of PDVSA. The industrial action was extended for an extra 24-hours on the evening of 9th April. The next morning, the front pages of newspapers greeted the public with open calls for putsch. Primero

Justicia called for “the instant demission of Chavez”; Tal Cual demanded a “civilian insurrection”; “the army must intervene”, urged El Nuevo, while El Nacional headlined, “the decisive battle will be at Miraflores.”⁵⁷

CTV’s Ortega and FEDECAMERAS’ Carmona, extended the strike indefinitely on the night of the 10th April’s march. Following this announcement, the private media ran make-shift commercials every ten minutes, encouraging the public to pour out on the street. Brigadier General Gonzalez had earlier in the day issued an ultimatum to Chavez, with demands for his demission. On the 11th of April, protestors from the middle-class enclaves responded to the media’s call. As they marched to PDVSA’s office, thousands of Chavistas had congregated outside the presidential palace. Addressing the opposition demonstrators outside PDVSA’s premises, Ortega without authorised approval, redirected the dissenters to Miraflores, in demand for Chavez’s demission. Shortly thereafter, Freddy Bernal, the Mayor of Caracas, appeared on state television, denouncing Ortega’s call, and urged him to halt his attempts to create a needless confrontation. The private media, on this matter, gave wide publicity and explicit approval to the protestors march to Miraflores.⁵⁸

The media moguls indicated they could do nothing, in response to the Defence Minister’s phone call, asking that they halt the march. Carmona reiterated the position of the media moguls in response to General Rincon’s phone call attempt to dissuade him. He further pointed out that the ‘grace period’ for dialogue had run out. With word of the march to Miraflores in public domain, more Chavistas emerged from the mountainside barrios of Caracas to the presidential palace, in defence of Chavez.⁵⁹ For reasons not best known, the president’s whereabouts became a subject

of speculation on private media platforms. Some reported he had resigned and deserted the palace, while others stated he had been detained. Flanked by some members of the military command on state television, General Lucas Rincon repudiated the allegations and reassured the public that the president was in office and had not resigned. General Lameda, whom Chavez dismissed as head of PDVSA, and Rear Admiral Tamayo, instigated the protestors to surge onwards amidst the barrage of tear gas.⁶⁰

At about 2pm, protestors from the opposite ends began hurling objects at each other. Suddenly, Chavistas were shot at by snipers. To add to the confusion, the shots were also fired at the opposition protestors, with their leaders nowhere in sight. Among those shot and wounded was Tony Velasquez, a bodyguard to the vice-president. The president issued a “Cadena Nacional” (equivalent to the Emergency Action Notifications of the US, which permits the president to hold a joint national broadcast during emergencies). He made an appeal for calm while outlining his government’s achievements. The private television channels split the screens, a side showing Chavez’s speech with inaudible sound, and the other showing the mayhem outside the palace. Signalled by his aide of the situation on the television screens, Chavez announced his order to have their signals jammed. He accused them of propaganda and incitement of resistance to lawful authority.⁶¹

The opposition leaders who surreptitiously slipped from the violent protest, rendezvoused at Venevision where they denounced Chavez for the killings and urged the military to step in. Though the snipers remained unknown, the private media narrative depicted the violence as a Chavista monopoly. To back their claim, they broadcasted a video which showed pistol-wielding

Chavistas on the Llaguno bridge, purportedly shooting at ‘innocent marchers’ with no footage of what they were firing at. Juxtaposing it with separate videos showing the wounded being carried into the presidential palace, the newscaster narrated “they (the government) had undoubtedly planned this, given that they had already set up a mobile hospital in the palace where they were treating those wounded by gunshot, victims of Chavistas.”⁶²

Minutes after the footage was aired, Efrain Velasco, the army head, flanked by other high-ranking officers, accused the president of having “violated the human rights of Venezuelans”. “This isn’t a coup”, he added, but “solidarity with the people”. He then turned to the high-ranking military officers, urging them, “fulfil your duty”. With the state television stormed and closed down by the police on the orders of Mendoza, the opposition governor of Miranda, the Chavez administration was denied the means to have its say. The opposition elements from the erstwhile political order, business men, military and media, continued their ceaseless accusation of the president.⁶³ At about half an hour to 11pm, General Alberto Camacho of the National Guard, announced that the president had deserted his office and further declared that the country was under the control of the army. Contrary to this claim, Chavez still remained in office at Miraflores. As later recounted by Carmona, he left Venevision and headed to the military headquarters in Fort Tiuna, where he claims to have accepted the military offer to form a new government.⁶⁴

That midnight, the rebels engaged the president in a series of negotiations. They demanded his signature to a prepared resignation letter; he in turn requested that four conditions be first met. First, to have the safety of his officials and family guaranteed. Secondly, to ensure compliance

with the constitutional provision that stipulates that he resigned before the National Assembly and be succeeded by his vice-president till elections were held. Thirdly, that he be allowed to address the nation live on television. Fourthly, that he be granted a safe passage out of the country.⁶⁵ With no time on their side, they agreed to the conditions and threatened to bomb Miraflores if he failed to give in. Around 3am on the 12th of April, Chavez called General Rincon to inform him of his intent to accede to the rebels' demands.⁶⁶ Thirty minutes later, Rincon went on air to announce the president's resignation. Shortly thereafter, the rebels sent a word to Chavez that they were no longer willing to go by his terms.⁶⁷ The president was driven off the palace at about 4am to the military headquarters. By 4:50 am, Carmona announced he had taken reins of the country.⁶⁸

The international corporate media uncritically went along with the private local media's narrative. They announced Chavez's resignation and justified his removal on grounds of his alleged involvement in the killings. For instance, Phil Gunson, a Miami Herald contributor, informed US listeners on National Public Radio that Chavistas were responsible for the sniper shooting. When the studio host inquired about the government's response, he replied that a person at the palace pointed an accusing finger at Mendoza's controlled Metropolitan police. "That's completely false from what I know", he concluded.⁶⁹

Back at Fort Tiuna, Chavez met the opposition military officers and two Catholic Bishops, Porras and Luis. The officers requested that Chavez resigns "in the name of all those present". He, on the other hand, insisted on his four conditions, to which the officers left to deliberate in another room. While awaiting their decision in a room with the two Bishops and a guard, Chavez

questioned why Porras failed to show up as he had promised earlier in the day. He only said he couldn't. He apologised for having referred to Bishop Parra as the "devil's investment" and reminded the priests of their role in the conflict. He recounted telling them he was at peace since he was being loyal to the interest of the masses who elected him and not the minority.⁷⁰

The officers returned to inform Chavez of their non-acceptance of his conditions. He, in response, refused to sign the resignation letter. Given a room and ordered out of his uniform for a civilian attire, he requested for a television. As he tuned in, he saw political pundits, journalist and others demonising him amidst the misinformation that he had resigned. On one Venevision programme, the director for the Statistical Institute, Manuel Garcia, thanked host Bravo for having allowed Brigadier General Gonzalez to use his house to record the call to rebellion.⁷¹ They publicly disclosed that the crisis had been planned beforehand.

Later that morning, El Nacional read, "a grave has been reserved for Chavez, next to presidents remembered for their atrocities"; La Noticia headlined, "The assassin fell" and El Universal, "The last crime of a dictator".⁷² In an address to reporters, Ari Fleischer, the White House spokesperson, blamed Chavez, stating that it was "on the orders of Chavez, that his supporters fired on peaceful protestors resulting in 10 killed and a hundred wounded".⁷³ In its 13th April editorial, the New York Times indicated that "Venezuela has been saved from a would-be dictator", only to render an apology three days after the return of Chavez. The Times pointed out that its publicised reaction overlooked the undemocratic manner by which Chavez was removed.⁷⁴

While at Fort Tiuna, Chavez informed two female military attorneys who interviewed him that he had not resigned. They in turn faxed a copy of the statement to Isaias Rodriguez, the State Attorney. Given the media's blackout on pro-Chavez narratives, he convened a press conference on the pretext of announcing his resignation. Before the live transmission was abruptly truncated, he swiftly relayed to the public that the president never resigned.

Around 5pm, the opposition elements began hunting for Chavez's appointees. That evening, the Venezuelan elites assembled at the presidential palace for the swearing in of Pedro Carmona, whom the New York Times described as "Manager and conciliator"; BBC News, "respected economist" with other mainstream media heaping praises on the self-sworn in president.⁷⁵ Shortly after, he issued a decree which later came to be known as the Carmona decree. Bolivia's name was withdrawn from the country's official name, oil to Cuba and the 1999 constitution were suspended, the supreme court, the electoral commission, the National Assembly and other democratic state institutions were dissolved to the cheers of "Democracia!" by the assembled elites. The US State Department recognised Carmona's government while attempting to rally international support. Latin American countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, Cuba, Argentina, Peru and others called the new government "illegitimate."⁷⁶

In the early hours of Saturday, 13th April, Carmona received US ambassador Shapiro at the presidential palace. Soon after, the owners of the leading private media houses, Venevision's Cisneros, RCTV's Marcel Granier, Globovision's Alberto Ravell and Televen's Omar Camero, stepped into the palace from their black limousines. In their meeting, Carmona urged them to do

all they could to support the new government. Preparations to officially install members of his new government was also underway.⁷⁷

Outside the palace, information was circulating in the barrios by word of mouth and phone-calls, that Chavez had not resigned and rather held captive at the military headquarters. The pro-Chavez protests began growing larger every passing minute at Fort Tiuna, Miraflores and other parts of the country. The elite controlled police began to violently suppress the protests, killing a number of Chavistas.⁷⁸ As the crowd became uncontrollably huge, the neighbourhood police just watched on. The private media did not give coverage to the protests amassing at the presidential palace. Globovision's Ravell is reported to have called CNN "to join the blackout". Interviewed by CNN, Carmona declared that the situation in the country was calm and under his control.⁷⁹

As time went by, the impoverished masses gathered at the palace, continued growing in their hundreds of thousands, all to the blackout of local media. General Raul Baduel, a founding member of MBR-200 and head of Chavez's old paratrooper unit in Maracay, tried to make his opposition to the coup public, but private media granted no coverage. Baduel contacted a number of loyal commanders as well as Col. Cardona, who had Miraflores' honour guard under his command. Chavez's loyalists momentarily gained control of the state television, gave a counter-narrative of the 11th April crisis and that Chavez had not resigned. The station was intermittently going on and off. Turning a blind eye to the pro-Chavez protests, Venevision was airing "Pretty Woman"; RCTV, "Cartoons"; Televen, "Baseball" and Globovision, a CNN affiliate, showed repeats of General Rincon's announcement of Chavez's 'resignation'.⁸⁰

Before midday, loyalist troops marched through underground tunnels, and in collaboration with the presidential guards, they took approximately 24 opposition officials, captive. Among the captives, was Daniel Romero, a former aide to ex-president Perez, who had a day earlier read the Carmona decree to the cheers and applause of the assembled elite. On the other hand, Carmona had absconded with other officials like they did two days earlier during the sniper shooting. With loyalist forces in charge of the palace, Chavez's officials began trooping into Miraflores. By 8pm, the State television was fully on air with the head of the presidential guard announcing that Chavez remained the democratically elected president of Venezuela. By 10pm, vice-president Cabello was temporarily sworn in as president in absence of Chavez. At Fort Tiuna military headquarters, General Carneiro arrested Carmona and other high-ranking military officers who partook in the putsch whiles keeping the pro-Chavez protestors at the headquarters abreast of developments.⁸¹ The loyal forces embarked on Operation Rescue National Dignity in the bid to rescue Chavez at La Orchila island. By 3am on the 14th April, Chavez appeared at Miraflores and to the euphoric crowd he remarked, "To God what is God's, to Caesar what is Caesars, and to the people what is the people's."⁸²

3.4 Underlying Conditions that Precipitated the Attempted Coup

Venezuela is a nation of immigrants. As at 1998 when Chavez first took office, the ethnic composition of the country comprised 2% native Amerindians, 10% Afro-Venezuelans, 20% European-Venezuelans, 64% mixed Indian and African or European lineage, and 4% representing others.⁸³ With the wealth explosion that accompanied oil production in the 1920s, president Vicente Gomez did next to nothing for public education, with the view that "an ignorant populace is a submissive one".⁸⁴ In the immediate aftermath of World War II, president

Romulo Betancourt agreed to resettle thousands of Europeans in the country who largely made up about 20% of the wealthy class (as at 1998), with 80% of the population in abject poverty. The economic boom that typified the 70s witnessed corruption-laced projects, and overspending that widened economic inequality and left the country debt-ridden, respectively.

In compliance with IMF prescriptions under the second presidency of Carlos Perez, austerity measures were undertaken. The significant segment of the population deprived of the boom years, were now to bear the brunt of the austerity measures taken to correct the spill-over effects of the corruption that benefited the few. This resulted in a wave of popular protests in 1989. Chavez gave a face to the general discontent in his 1992 failed coups, and rode on that general discontent into the presidency in 1998. Prior Chavez's election, Transparency International classified Venezuela as one of the ten most corrupt countries in the world.⁸⁵ In contrast to the IMF prescriptions that provoked the popular protests by the poor, by way of riots and looting; Chavez's anti-neoliberal measures instigated an unpopular protest largely by the white elites who employed all their privileged arsenals (their hold on PDVSA, FEDECAMARAS, CTV, and the media in particular) against the Chavez led administration. It is against this backdrop that the intra-state power struggle was set afoot. A struggle between the government as the principal representative of a civil society fragmented along race and class lines, and the private dominated market interests. The factors that fuelled the attempted coup can be categorised into remote and immediate domestic causes and remote foreign causes.

The now defunct 1961 constitution was widely perceived to have divided political power between the elitist traditional parties to the exclusion and detriment of the common citizen.

Despite being the first in the nation's history to have been drafted and approved by popular referendum, the 1999 constitution found itself enemies amongst the remnants of the traditional parties, who lost their positions in the judiciary and legislative assemblies, as a result of the Chavez proposed constitutional reform. Chavez enforcement of the constitutional requirement for a first-time direct election in the nation's main labour union (CTV), infuriated its old guards. This also won the administration an enemy in CTV's head, Carlos Ortega, formerly the head of the oil workers union. The land redistribution programme seems to have also threatened the interest of the business community, a community of business owners (FEDECAMERAS) led by Pedro Carmona. The proximate cause of the attempted coup was Chavez's introduction of the hydrocarbons law.

On the international scene, Chavez's role in OPEC's reduction in oil supply and the corresponding rise in oil prices; his alliance and supply of oil to U.S. isolated Cuba; refusal to allow US use its airspace for military operations in Colombia; visit to Saddam Hussain's Iraq, Gaddafi's Libya, anti-neoliberal policies and public criticism of U.S.'s 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, were enough reasons for the U.S. to want Chavez out of office.

Chavez's decision to strengthen government's hold on the state oil company, which in his words had become a "state within a state" under the heel of the elite, appears to be in line with Canizalez⁸⁶ and Gramsci's⁸⁷ view, that a government must hold on to influential institutions and satisfactorily meet the demands of the masses, should it seek to ease frictions while remaining in power. The blunder he however committed was his attempt to tighten his hold on an influential

institution like PDVSA without first possessing or securing the media consensus or hegemony required to smoothen the implementation of the hydrocarbons law.

3.5 The Venezuelan Media's Role

The private media's campaign was geared towards shaping the opinion of both the public and international policy makers, and to as well delegitimise Chavez's constitutionally constituted authority, while attempting to confer legitimacy on an imposed Carmona administration of elite creation. The pre-violation justification for the attempted unconstitutional ouster and delegitimization of the Chavez administration was found in the allegation that Chavez had ordered the killing of opposition protestors.

In review of Christian et al.'s⁸⁸ normative roles of the media, it can be inferred that the "monitorial role" was lacking in the Venezuelan media landscape, a role that demands an impartial check on power while dispassionately bringing social predicaments to light.

The state media played a "facilitative role" as it engendered a sense of collective purpose while attenuating apathy among the populace. However, having allowed itself to be drawn into an overly defensive posturing for the Chavez administration, it deprived itself of its "monitorial function" (a role of neutrality and objectivity), bereft of consensus building, hence unable to derail the conflict on its path to violence. It can also be argued, that the private media with its dominant force, made the derailment of the conflict from the rail of violence to the rail of dialogue, practically impossible. This is evidenced by the elite's demand for Chavez's resignation, call for confrontation, and the media moguls' refusal to defuse tensions as requested

by the Defence Minister, and Carmona's response to General Rincon, that the "time for dialogue had run out".

The private media, on the other hand, played a "collaborative role" in line with the advancement of the neoliberal market's agenda and its proponents, within and beyond the frontiers of Venezuela. They in essence assumed a public relations function of the elite, thus a matter of "who pays the piper calling the tune".

On the subject of propaganda, it must be noted that the private media employed white propaganda in its reportage. In the sense that, its campaign was overt (identifiable source), its reportage interwoven with half-truth (juxtaposition of separate video, one showing people shooting, another showing victims being carried to Miraflores) as supposed evidence of Chavistas shooting 'innocent and peaceful' opposition protestors. The media's unverified half-truth provided a supposedly reasonable ground on which its reportage was taken as truth in its entirety, thus leading to false conclusions as intended by the source.

3.6 What Compromised the Media's Role in the Political Crisis

From the power perspective as postulated by Gadi Wolfsfeld⁸⁹, a media that is anything but 'independent', automatically opens itself to be used as an instrument of control or manipulation in the hands of its benefactors. The 11th April 2002 political crisis clearly demonstrates that the media landscape was dominated by the power elite. Wolfsfeld further asserts that the deeper the elite consensus on information warfare, the likelier it is that the media will mirror and reinforce such elite manufactured, driven consensus. The elite dissatisfaction with Chavez's policies that

threatened their vested interests, the apparently coordinated media attacks on Chavez's presidency, and the eventual convergence of the media moguls and Carmona at Miraflores, barely a day after the attempted coup, speaks volume of an artificially manufactured consensus falsely advertised as a popular uprising.

As succinctly put by Lee and Yahya,⁹⁰ capitalist globalisation requires media hegemony to popularise and legitimise ideologies and mechanisms complementary to deregulation and privatisation.

3.7 Countering the Media Hegemony

Upon Chavez's reinstatement and restoration of democratic normality, he did not immediately move in to persecute the media moguls, journalists and traditional parties who were complicit in the botched coup. Like other media and conflict scholars, Chavez observed that the political crisis would not have escalated without the elites' weaponization of the media. Contrary to the expectations of the international community and opposition at home, he rather adopted a conciliatory approach in dealing with the situation. The media's hostility, though toned-down, continued in an implicit fashion.

As a counter-measure, the government broadened the coverage of the state's sole television station (Channel 8/VTV) to an estimated 90% of the population, and also extended broadcasting to 24-hours per day.⁹¹ In addition to Channel 8, the president launched Vision Venezuela (ViVe Television) in November 2003. The rationale behind its establishment was to project the government's achievements and to as well promote the Venezuelan culture. "The channel of the

people's power" has been its slogan since its inception. In 2004, the government instituted the Ministry of Popular Power for Communication and Information. That same year, the Law on Social Responsibility on Radio and Television was passed, and amended in 2010 to cover electronic media. These measures were said to have been taken to restore order and guard against unethical journalism in the media landscape.

Following a Jimmy Carter mediated negotiation between Venevision's Cisneros and Chavez in 2004, Venevision adopted an even-handed reportage. Televen took a similar path by terminating its political opinion programme, thus assuming a neutral stance.⁹² RCTV and Globovision continued on their anti-Chavez editorial policy. In 2007, the government refused to renew RCTV's broadcasting license and thus replaced the channel's signal with a new state television, named, Venezuelan Social Television. Globovision remained defiant, till its eventual sale to new owners in 2013.⁹³ It can be deduced from the preceding review, that Chavez's administration adopted a gradualist yet dual approach in countering the media hegemony of the traditional political order. This is in the sense that, he first widened the capacity of the state media and secondly implemented measures that neutralised the hostile potency of the private media into oblivion.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter established that the mass media adversely impacted the 2002 Venezuelan conflict by inflaming opposition protests and urging military intervention.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter underscores the summary of findings in light of the research objectives. It also captures conclusions drawn from examination of the study findings and outlines appropriate recommendations.

4.1 Summary of Findings

Generally, the study sought to examine the impact of the media on intra-state conflict vis-à-vis international politics, the case of Venezuela (2002). Specifically, it delved into the underlying conditions that precipitated the political crisis, the media's role in shaping the events leading to the crisis and the factors that compromised the media's role in managing the conflict.

The study identified two major underlying conditions that precipitated the political crisis, namely, the domestic conditions and foreign conditions. The domestic conditions are sub-classified into remote domestic causes and immediate domestic causes. The remote domestic causes include years of marginalization of largely Amerindian, Afro-Venezuelan and Mulatto-Mestizo ethnic groups; the 1999 constitutional reform; enforcement of the constitutional requirement for a first-time direct election in the nation's main labour union (CTV); and implementation of Mission Zamora (the land redistribution programme). The immediate domestic cause, however, was the introduction of the hydrocarbons law which required that PDVSA holds not less than fifty-one percent stake in any new joint venture with foreign oil companies and an increase in the minimum royalty rate of 1% to 30%. The foreign conditions

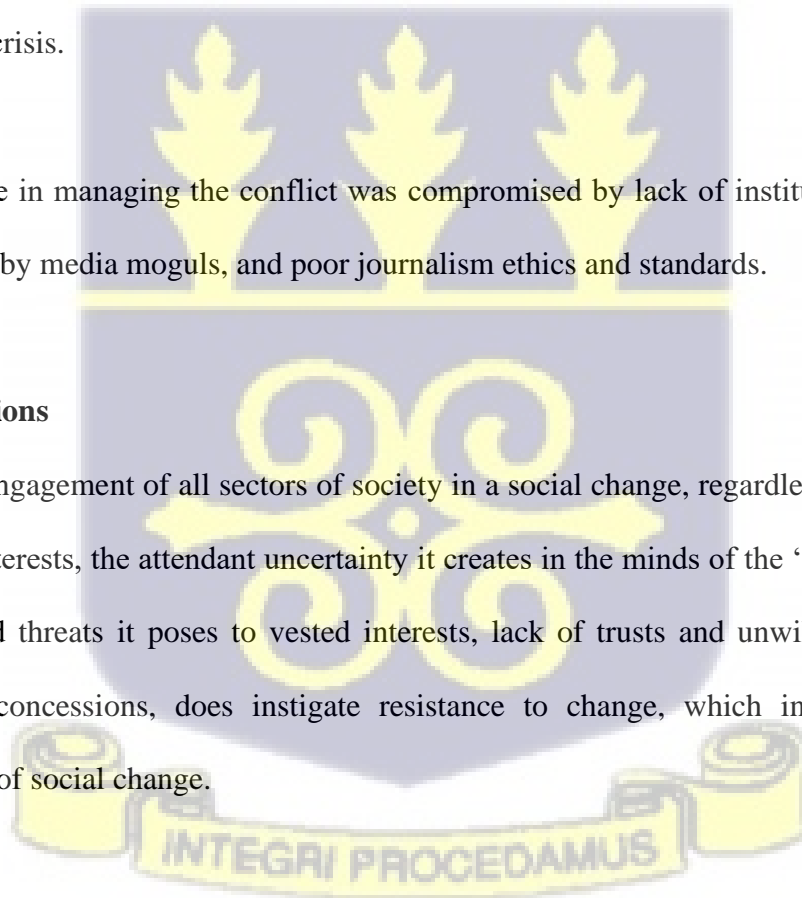
were Chavez's role in OPEC's reduction in oil supply and the corresponding rise in oil prices; his alliance and supply of oil to U.S. isolated Cuba; refusal to allow US use its airspace for operations in Colombia; visit to Saddam Hussain's Iraq, Gaddafi's Libya, anti-neoliberal policies and public criticism of U.S.'s 'war on terror' in Afghanistan.

Additionally, the research found that the media employed white propaganda and largely assumed a collaborative role in connivance with the elite and their foreign affiliates, which played a significant role in escalating the political crisis. Arguably, the media played no substantive role in defusing tensions, since it was Chavez's call for calm upon his reinstatement that in effect deescalated the crisis.

The media's role in managing the conflict was compromised by lack of institutional autonomy, undue influence by media moguls, and poor journalism ethics and standards.

4.2 Conclusions

Lack of active engagement of all sectors of society in a social change, regardless of their distinct identities and interests, the attendant uncertainty it creates in the minds of the 'marginalised', the real or imagined threats it poses to vested interests, lack of trusts and unwillingness to make people-centred concessions, does instigate resistance to change, which in essence hinders implementation of social change.



Also, the alacrity with which the international corporate media unquestionably propagated as truth, Venezuela's private media's narrative of the political crisis, lends credence to Herman and Chomsky's view that mainstream media are generally a tool of large business interests.

The study also established that the mainstream media can be used to construct, circulate and lend 'false credence' to a narrative or 'alternate reality' divergent from actual events.

The failed media attempt to create a "popular opposition" against Chavez, does demonstrate that a public deeply involved in political activities with a strong attachment to a political programme, is less likely to change its opinion in response to new or contrasting information.

The private media's all-out offensive against the state, placed the state media in an all-out defence of the government. Chavez's counter media hegemony measures that followed, seem to have regulated the private media into submission and obligated the state media outlets to promote government policies. This has somewhat deprived the Venezuelan media landscape of a truly independent, monitorial (watchdog) and constructive media functions that should tolerate responsible yet divergent views which are requisite for participatory democracy and progressive society.

The U.S. visa refusal to Chavez during his first presidential campaign, on grounds of his past record in an attempted ouster of a democratically constituted government, while later justifying the brief overthrow of Chavez, smacks of double-standards. It also falls in consonance with Alqama and Nawaz's view that the media portrayal of U.S. and its liberal ideals of

individual rights, freedom and democracy, are masks veiling the interests of a global capitalist class to obtain legitimacy and manufacture consent.

Conclusively, the media had an adverse impact on the Venezuelan intra-state conflict by escalating tensions. It inflamed the opposition protests and urged military intervention. At best, it blacked-out on the counter-protest that largely contributed to the reinstatement of Chavez. According to Antonio Gramsci, “civil society as a revolutionary project can neutralise the coercive machinery of a state, thus paving way for the subaltern masses to obtain political power”. The greater truth however, as in the Venezuelan context, is that consent (the people’s voice) armoured with coercion (support of military loyalists) resulted in the reinstatement of the masses endorsed president and restoration of democratic normality.

4.3 Recommendations

From the above conclusions as grounded in the findings of study, the following recommendations are made:

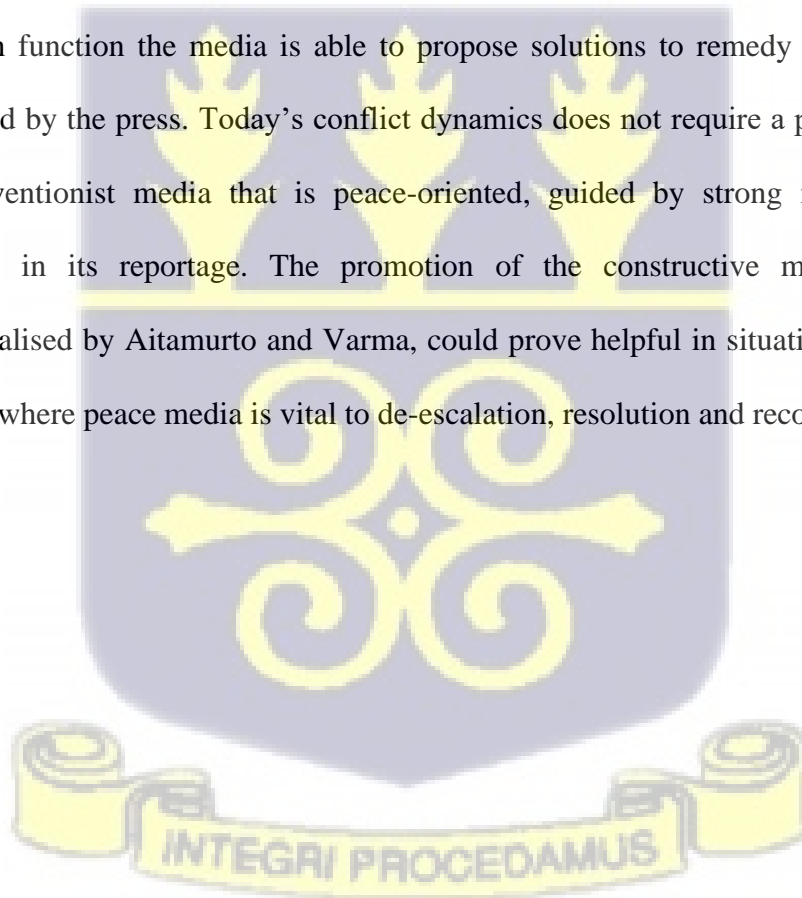
- Intolerance, violence and greed are learned behaviours. Given the role of this subtle yet pivotal elements in inter-personal, intra-state and inter-state relations, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education incorporate a course hinging on civil rights and responsibility, human values and the common good of humanity, into the basic education curriculum. The tutors should be well-trained with proven track record of integrity in their conduct, as this would reinforce in practice what the younger generation learns in theory. Besides, there is enough for all, but not enough for greed clothed in, for

want of a better term, exploitative-capitalism, where profit reigns supreme over human values.

- In order to limit or neutralise potential resistance to a change in policy, government should be guided by the principle of multi-stakeholder partnership which requires a cross-sector dialogue in a policy's development stage. In the case of Venezuela, influential bodies of civil society such as the Catholic Church, the media fraternity, the business community, the labour union and leading members of the opposition parties should have been consulted, a consultation made open to the public via live broadcast. Such transparency will render each participant circumspect in his/her statements, allay fears/anxiety and as well foster commitment to the policy implementation. Governments should also place much emphasis on participatory democracy, as this would help dispel any uncertainties or confusion that may arise from the broadcast of false information or propaganda aimed at destabilising a government. The onus largely lies on the shoulders of the Ministry of Information.
- Rising economic inequality is one of the leading global problems that has given rise to several intra-state conflicts and upsurge in social vices. Most of the social vices and criminal activities that take place, from prostitution, human trafficking, armed robbery, terrorist recruitment, drug trafficking, looting to other vices, are more often than not, the outcome of economic inequality. Governments should therefore prioritise equal access to an educational system designed to meet the needs of both national and global markets. The Caracazo (1989 protests) demonstrates that years of deprivation feeds into militancy

and that the ordinary citizen is more concerned with having his/her needs met, than with the system of government in place. A progressive and stable government is the one that pays attention to the needs of its populace. This recommendation requires an inter-ministerial approach with inputs from the Education Ministry, Industry and National Production Ministry and Women and Gender Equality Ministry.

- The government should promote tolerance of varied views and opinions on the airwaves. The suppression of dissent could in the long term prove disastrous for the peace and political stability of the country. The constructive media function should be encouraged by which function the media is able to propose solutions to remedy societal problems uncovered by the press. Today's conflict dynamics does not require a passive media, but an interventionist media that is peace-oriented, guided by strong media ethics and objective in its reportage. The promotion of the constructive media function as conceptualised by Aitamurto and Varma, could prove helpful in situations of conflicting interests where peace media is vital to de-escalation, resolution and reconciliation efforts.



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