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BOOK REVIEWS

John C. Pollock and Douglas A. Vakoch (editors)

COVID-19 IN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA: GLOBAL PANDEMIC PERSPECTIVES
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COVID-19 in International Media: Global Pandemic Responses, edited by John C. Pollock and Douglas A. Vakoch, is the book that puts focus on the question of how the media function worldwide in pandemic circumstances. The COVID-19 outbreak provoked many political, economic, and social issues in various national contexts, and the strategies and tactics introduced to minimize health risks were diverse and often guided by specific cultural norms. As a new momentum, compared to previous pandemics of such proportions, COVID-19 is characterized by ubiquitous mediatization, that has positive, as well as negative repercussions. The book highlights some of them. It is divided into four main sections that thematize the relationships between media, culture, government agency, and technology. There are 20 chapters in the book.

The first section is "Cultural differences in communication and identity". It consists of five chapters. The first chapter, "Coronavirus response asymmetries in the Global North and Global South: new challenges and recommendations" by Philip Santos, stresses the imperative of reaching the mutual recognition and cooperation among people from different parts of the world. Santos emphasizes relations between Africa and developed countries, and the importance of promoting solidarity and equality, instead of dependency. The second chapter is titled "Between declarations of war and praying for help: analyzing heads of states' speeches from a cross-cultural point of view". In this chapter, the authors Eika Auschner, Julia Heitsch, and Zully Paola Martínez Torres present content analysis of 11 political speeches, analyzed with the use of 11 criteria, such as, for instance, high/low context communication, and hierarchical/egalitarian style. Based on their analysis, speeches are classified as culturally expected, culturally ambiguous, and culturally unexpected.

"Unsettled belongings in deglobalization: Chinese immigrants' struggle for political identity by using transnational media in the COVID-19 pandemic" is the third chapter of the book. In this chapter, the author Zhipeng Gao uses Stuart Hall's theories of ideology and media in order to unpack rhetorical approaches to the pandemic as demonstrated by the Chinese government, highlighting its impact on immigrants from China who live in other countries. Gao concludes that anti-Western Chinese transnational media "cause some new Chinese immigrants to be alienated from their host societies" (p. 51). The following chapter is "Framing the pandemic as a conflict between China and Taiwan: analysis of COVID-19 discourse on Taiwanese social media" by Ling-Yi Huang. This chapter stresses the connections between online debates and Taiwanese public health policy. PTT, the most influential Taiwanese social media, framed the pandemic as a knowingly created risk, involuntary risk, universal risk, and environmental risk. In this way, such opinion environment was created that pressured the politicians to react. The fifth chapter is "Comparing coronavirus online searching and media reporting: alignment or disconnect? A big data analysis of media reportage and public information seeking in Nigeria". In this chapter, the authors Mutiu Iyanda Lasisi and Obasanjo Joseph Oyedele present a study

that shows that the mass media in Nigeria did not consider useful inputs regarding what their potential audiences search online to guide their reporting (p. 77).

"Responses to regulation: media as instruments of social control or conflict/resistance" is the second section of the book, and it consists of four chapters. The sixth chapter, "Imagining pandemic as a failure: writing, memory, and forgetting under COVID-19 in China", by Yawen Li and Marius Meinhof, discusses the imagination of national failure, and provokes questions regarding state strategies of information control. The following chapter is "Arrest of the public interest or fight for public health in Serbia: contrasting roles of professional and citizen journalists". The author Kristina Ćendić observes that the deeply polarized media landscape in Serbia demonstrated its pattern with pro-government media approving of actions against citizens, and on the other side, pro-opposition media insisting on the need to balance the state of emergency and public interest. Dyah Pitaloka and Nelly Martin-Anatias are the authors of the chapter "'We don't want to cause public panic': pandemic communication of the Indonesian Government responding to COVID-19". In this chapter, it is investigated how discourse and other semiotic elements contribute to the meaning-making process. The results of the research indicate that the Indonesian government's pandemic communication is strongly guided by Javanese cultural values (p. 114). The final chapter in this section of the book is "Pathological borders: how the coronavirus pandemic strengthened depictions of the Cyprus partition in the media and by the government". The author Daniele Nunziata conducted an analysis regarding the connection between the pandemic and political debates surrounding the "Cyprus problem". It is shown how specific circumstances can be used in order to provide justification for political goals and actions.

The third section is "Responses to regulation: media as instruments of cooperation and representation". It begins with the tenth chapter, "Digital media and COVID-19 in the UK and India: challenges and constructive contributions". Besides investigating situation in the two countries, the authors Indrani Lahiri, Debanjan Banerjee, K. S. Meena, Anish V. Cherian, and Maryam Alsulaimi emphasize in a general manner a "serious need to develop digital social responsibility policy by the governments at all levels, to break the pernicious trend and hold the social media giants accountable for helping to permeate fake news, as billions of people access them" (p. 135). In the chapter "New Zealand's success in tackling COVID-19: how Ardern's government effectively used social media and consistent messaging during the global pandemic", the author Nelly Martin-Anatias uses discourse and interpretive analysis to show an example of a quality political leadership that reduced the perceived gap between the politicians and citizens. The twelfth chapter is "Coronavirus pandemic: a historical handshake between the mainstream media and social media in response to COVID-19 in Vietnam" by Hang Thi Thuy Dinh and Hien Thi Minh Nguyen. The study that the authors conducted showed that social and mainstream media in Vietnam interacted with each other, and that social media fulfilled a function of extension arm of mainstream media in transmitting news concerning the pandemic. The following chapter is "Bloggers against panic: Russian-speaking Instagram bloggers in China and Italy reporting about COVID-19", where the authors Anna Smoliarova, Tamara Gromova, and Ekaterina Sharkova point to the fact that Russian-speaking bloggers served as fact-checkers for their audiences, living in China, Italy, and other countries.

Alberto del Campo Tejedor writes about the issue of how the coronavirus crisis in Spain interacted with political crisis between the central government and the pro-independence government of Catalonia in the chapter titled "Reimagined communities in the fight against the invisible enemy: soccer and the national question in Spain". The fifteenth chapter is "US nationwide COVID-19 newspaper coverage of state and local government responses: community structure theory and community 'vulnerability'" by John C. Pollock et al. In this chapter, the authors present research on COVID-19 coverage through the use of media frames, and they also write about how community demographics influences the news coverage. The following chapter is "Exploring the COVID-19 social media infodemic: health communication challenges and opportunities". As the author Carolyn A. Lin states, the objective of this chapter is to help researchers in the field of risk communication, policymakers, and health professionals gain understanding of how people perceive and respond to the "myths, misinformation, disinformation, and rumors amidst an infodemic, alongside science-based facts and recommendations" (p. 196).

Finally, the fourth section is titled "Risk, space, and cyberattacks. It consists of four chapters. Manufacturing fear: infodemics and scaremongering about coronavirus and Ebola epidemics on social media platforms in West Africa" by Paul Obi and Floribert Patrick C. Endong. It addresses the problem of the fact that citizens act quickly in sharing dis/misinformation with the intent to inform others. Şemsettin Tabur examines how the COVID-19 pandemic was represented in a number of real, imagined, and lived spaces, including for instance media and political discourse in the chapter "Space matters in narrating the catastrophe: relational riskscapes of COVID-19, dominant discourses, and the example of Turkey". The nineteenth chapter of the book is "Risk society in the age of pandemics: disaster reporting in the media – Ebola and COVID-19". In this chapter, the authors Demond Shondell Miller and Nicola Davis Bivens claim that in the modern age of pandemics "risk and the value of information will continue to increase" (p. 244). The final chapter is "Abusing the COVID-19 pan(dem)ic: a perfect storm for online scams". In this chapter, the authors Kristjan Kikerpill and Andra Siibak present content analysis used for studying prevalent communication types in COVID-19 themed online scams and conclude that criminals easily adapt to ongoing social situations.

The book *COVID-19 in International Media: Global Pandemic Responses* is a useful guide for media scholars, students, and practitioners. It includes studies conducted across the world, that provide an opportunity to recognize local specifics, as well as a wider, global picture. Different methodological approaches presented in the book may inspire some new research projects. As the number of health risks increases in modern times, it is important for citizens to be aware that communication can solve, but also cause problems. It is a powerful tool that decentralizes strict hierarchy related to political and other decision-making processes. On the other hand, nowadays, disinformation enters the public sphere on short notice. Mainstream media and citizen journalists can work together on a mission of making the media environment healthier.

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THE DYNAMICS OF NEWS: JOURNALISM IN THE 21ST-CENTURY MEDIA MILIEU
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The university textbook *The Dynamics of News: Journalism in the 21st-Century Media Milieu* is the latest monograph by Richard M. Perloff, Professor of Communication, Political Science, and Psychology at Cleveland State University. Through 11 informative chapters, the author discusses the varied determinants of news, how it is shaped by the larger society while at the same time serving as an agent of change, how it fits into the networked digital sphere, as well as changing normative perspectives.

In the first chapter, "Prologue: News in a Fragmented Age", the author refers to several recent examples of racial bigotry against African Americans in the U.S. that became news only after going viral on social networks, thereby introducing readers to the topic of the book – *the multiplicity and complexity of contemporary news*. He reminds of the normative functions of news in a democracy that (should) include the description of the world we live in, interpretation of complex processes, promotion of empathy, and organization of public opinion. He concludes that "we live in turbulent and strange time, a decentralized era of news" (p. 9), and asks the question: What is the essence of news and journalism, and can they survive?

Chapter 2, "News and Journalism in the 21st-Century Milieu", discusses the changing media environment and four main characteristics of contemporary news. First, contemporary news is multifaceted – current and deep, but also fragmented and filled with information of questionable accuracy. Second, social media and the Internet have usurped the news media's exclusive gatekeeping role. Third, citizen journalism has entered the fray. Fourth, journalistic roles and categories are becoming less clear. The chapter concludes that journalism will become even more colourful and multifaceted in the future, but that it will retain a central role in democratic processes.

In the third chapter, "Defining News and Journalism", the author offers an integrative definition of journalism as "a craft collectively devoted to truthfully assembling, reporting, and verifying information, based on particular criteria, transforming the accumulated information into news of matters of public importance, while, at the same time, illuminating social problems, articulating opinions about topics of public interest, and engaging richly with the community" (p. 57). He also proposes a simple definition of news as "a narrative account of new or recent matters of public interest" (p. 62), emphasizing that the focus of news should always be on *the public*, as well as that it is not an objective and tangible phenomenon, but rather a social construction of journalists.

"What Should News Do? Ideals and Complicating Realities" is the title of the fourth chapter, in which the author discusses criteria to evaluate the role of news and media in a democracy and proposes three normative perspectives. The first is *libertarian theory*, which emphasizes the citizens' right to freedom of expression, the independence of news from political influences, and the competition of ideas. The second is the *social responsibility theory*, which implies a wide range of roles of journalists and news, such as monitoring of the social environment, exposing systemic abuses, facilitating democratic dialogue, etc. The third is a *collaborative approach*, which assumes that journalists and

news can help authorities identify problems and propose solutions. In conclusion, the author believes that journalism and journalists play a central role in protecting critical citizenry (p. 106).

Chapter 5, "The Rich, Colourful History of American Journalism: Overview and Perspectives", provides a historical overview of journalism and news in the U.S. The author points out that early American newspapers (prior to 1775) were short pamphlets that rarely covered "big" political issues. Then came the American Revolutionary War (1775 – 1783), during which once peaceful printing offices became "hives of political activity" (p. 115). In the next fifty years newspapers became a channel through which social elites promoted their ideas and political parties attacked their opponents. From the 1830s some newspapers began to cover topics of interest for the middle class, primarily motivated by profit which they began to make through advertising. At the end of the 19th century, investigative journalism developed, as well as "yellow journalism" that favoured sensationalism over facts. For most of the 20th century, newspapers were "in the shadow" of radio and television, and at the beginning of the 21st century of social media. The author concludes that "a look back" is useful not only for elucidating the economic, cultural, and technological circumstances that shaped the media in the past, but also for understanding their position today.

In the sixth chapter, "Unpacking the News: Refracting Not Reflecting Reality", the author argues that news *does not* (fully) reflect reality. For example, they pay more attention to negative events even though "negativity" is not prevalent in the lives of average readers. He raises the question of what *does* determine the news and reminds of an earlier claim that journalists (socially) construct it. "Their perspective determines how they interpret, assimilate, and build a narrative from the information they weave into a story" (p. 165). In the last part of the chapter, the author discusses what truth and facts *actually are*, and, suggests striving for objective journalism – one that should be based on gathering of information from different and verified sources.

"Do Journalists' Personal Attributes Shape News? Myths and Realities" is the name of the seventh chapter, in which the author discusses the influence of journalists' *individual characteristics* on the shape of news. He points out that, for example, in the earlier stages of journalism in the U.S. "white journalists" openly discriminated African Americans, Indians and foreigners, "male journalists" were insensitive to issues such as (sexual) abuse of women, "secular journalists" were insensitive to the role of religion in lives of people, etc. However, the author asserts that the situation is different today and that journalists' individual characteristics should not be viewed in isolation from political and journalistic values that guide them.

Chapter 8, "Journalistic Routines and Why They Matter, discusses journalistic routines and professional practices" as another important factor that shape news. The first important routine are journalistic values, which the author divides into classical (novelty, threats to the social and moral order, elitism and prominence, conflict and controversy, dramatization and personalization, visuals, the big story of the moment), and contemporary (immediacy, interactivity, and participation). Another important routine concerns the journalistic sources, which can be formal (such as government spokespersons) and informal (such as unnamed sources).

In the ninth chapter, "Organizational and Economic Influences", the author writes about the third group of factors that shape the news – *organizational and economic factors*. Organizational factors imply the hierarchical and egalitarian organizational structure in the newsrooms, constellation of job demands, newsroom culture, and top-down political priorities. Economic factors include Internet-based evisceration of classified advertising and reduction in display advertising revenue, difficulties in developing a successful online funding model, challenges in finding ways to monetize online news use, and indifference to journalistic values on the part of institutional investors.

"News and the Social System: Conformity or Change?" is the title of the tenth chapter, in which the author discusses *ideological and system influences*, the fourth group of factors that shape the news. He poses a question of whether the news contributes to the preservation of the existing order and power relations or encourages change and refers to the system theory, which assumes that the role of one subsystem (in this case the media) cannot be observed in isolation from the broader political, economic, cultural, and ideological contours of society as a whole (p. 279). The chapter concludes that journalists regularly (even negatively) report on specific events from each of these (sub) systems, but do not question their foundations (for example, the ideas of civil liberties and concentration of wealth in the U.S.).

The last chapter is "Epilogue", where the author reflects on the question of whether journalism is in crisis. He suggests that it has *always* been in crisis and that the main challenge is to assess whether that crisis is more of economic, ideological, technological, or social nature. The conclusion is that the future of journalism is not in doubt because of the growing need for experts who will search for the truth in complex public space of conventional, participatory, and fake sites (p. 317), while there is still room for improvement in the form of innovations, giving readers more control over content, and for cooperation of journalists with other sectors and groups.

The presented book synthesizes many perspectives and offers a creative combination of historical and contemporary analysis of news, people, and society. It covers a wide range of topics – the classic theories of what news should do, popular myths of news, the overarching forces involved in contemporary news gathering, critical economic determinants of news and social system influences, and innovative trends in journalism. It carefully dissects the key aspects and delivers a critical yet hopeful assessment about the present and the future of news that can help students and scholars to evaluate the multitude of changes in the contemporary and evolving information environment.

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