Failure to Launch: International Broadcasters as Counter-Hegemonic News

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After the Cold War governments around the world reinvigorated or newly invested in 24-hour news channels such as Qatar's Al-Jazeera English, China Central Television, Russia Today, and Germany's Deutsche Welle. Distinct from domestic public service broadcasters, these international broadcasters are designed to reach foreign audiences to shift public opinion of the sponsoring state. Some scholars have argued these channels challenge the global hegemony of Anglo-American media, but this assertion has rarely been tested empirically. This article addresses this gap in the literature through a mixed-method analysis of four channels' coverage of citizen protests. Findings indicate that no network operated as counter-hegemonic in its coverage, but that scholars should operationalize counter-hegemony explicitly if it is to be useful.

Keywords: international broadcasting, counter-hegemony, contra-flow, public diplomacy, protest, state power

Global media power has engaged scholars from the Cold War to the present. In the post–Cold War scenario, Anglo-American content, exemplified by CNN and BBC, appeared to dominate global information flows (Biltereyst & Meers, 2000). But as early as 2005, new international broadcasters (IBs) such as Russia Today (RT) served as a regular stop for individuals outside of the political mainstream, including anti-European Union (EU) politicians like Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen, as well as White supremacist Richard Spencer (Snyder, 2018). International broadcasting comprises "a complex combination of state sponsored news, information, and entertainment" produced to shape foreign audiences' opinion of the sponsoring state (Price, Haas, & Margolin, 2008, p. 152). The BBC, founded in 1932 to confront the rise of totalitarianism, established many of the norms we see today. Government sponsorship allowed IBs to blossom in the wake of the Second World War. The United States and the Soviet Union developed broadcasting capacity as did West Germany with their Deutsche Welle (DW) radio network (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2018).

Some scholars have suggested that RT, and other channels, can be counter-hegemonic, operating outside of Anglo-American news norms and challenging existing power relations (Kuhn, 2010; Meng & Rantanen, 2015; Samuel-Azran, 2013; Seib, 2005; Thussu, 2007). A counter-hegemonic channel would have "an emphasis on self-representation and a diversity of voices, as well as diverse news formats and news genres" (Figenschou, 2012, p. 356). But the concept itself has been criticized for its theoretical imprecision (Curran, 2002; Manning, 2001) and "conceptual hollowness," which threatens to weaken the concept's usefulness (Figenschou, 2013, p. 101).

This article is an intervention on three fronts. It begins with an exploratory, comparative analysis of these new broadcasters' news content, in response to calls for greater comparative research of global media (Figenschou, 2013; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Second, I evaluate the concept of counter-hegemony by comparing broadcaster content, and I argue that if the concept is to be useful it must be more fully explicated in relation to broadcaster content. Third, I offer a preliminary proscription for how counter-hegemony might be rehabilitated.

IBs: A Brief History

Following the Cold War, China and Russia responded to what they perceived as biased Western coverage of domestic dissent by developing their own IB channels, China Central Television (CCTV) and RT, respectively. Western reporting on the Tiananmen Square protests signified to China's government that it needed to counter Western news narratives (Rawnsley, 2015). Former Chinese premier Hu Jintao claimed, "We must be sober enough to see that international hostile forces are intensifying the strategic plots to Westernize and divide us" (as cited in Shambaugh, 2013, p. 208).

Russia, under Putin, blasted Western media coverage during the mid-2000s' Color Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine (Saari, 2014) and later during the Georgian Ossetia conflict (Avgerinos, 2009). The perceived slight to Russian perspectives motivated the development of RT as a tool of information management. Both Russia and China claimed their 24-hour news channels challenged the Anglo-American global news monopoly and diversified global information flows ("About RT," 2021; "Brief Introduction," 2009). Likewise, Nigel Parsons from Al-Jazeera English (AJE) claimed the network would, "target an international audience and fill a gap in international news . . . that is not filtered through the lens of the West" (as cited in Powers, 2012, p. 19). Similarly, the mission of DW is to provide a "forum for German (and other) points of view on important topics, with the aim of promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples" ("About DW," 2021, para. 5). These IBs claim to represent alternatives to the current hegemonic balance of global media and therefore might be counter-hegemonic contra-flows.

Counter-Hegemony and Contra Flows

Contra-flow and counter-hegemony have been guiding concepts for studying the balance of power in global media yet they suffer from a lack of conceptual clarity (Figenschou, 2013). In a global context, a geographic dimension of resistance would be a contra-flow that delivers media content from east and south to west and north (Boyd-Barrett & Xie, 2008; Figenschou, 2010; Kasmani, 2013; Rantanen, 2007; Sakr,

2007). To the extent that AJE, RT, or CCTV are available in the developed world, they would be contra-flows in this limited sense. Availability is not the same as consumption, and there is little analysis of IB's media effects or influence (Stengel, 2019). Some have suggested that a true contra-flow would also be counter-hegemonic, being in some way qualitatively different from Western news norms (Sakr, 2007).

Counter-hegemony is also inconsistently operationalized, being implicit rather than explicitly explicated. Gramsci described hegemony as "relations of domination" that maintain uneven social relations (Carroll & Ratner, 1994, p. 5). Counter-hegemonic news channels would undo the consent to those relations of domination. But the academic literature suggests counter-hegemonic news may include several dimensions: sourcing of nonelites, sourcing from underreported countries and regions, the source's ideological views and their deviation from dominant ideologies such as neoliberalism, and production based outside the developed world.

The literature shows that several scholars have used these dimensions of contra-flow and counter-hegemony to analyze new broadcasters. Some argue that CCTV and RT are potential contra-flows that can contest CNN and BBC's ideological dominance with new subaltern news formats (Thussu, 2007, 2017). China's Xinhua and Russia's Sputnik are explicitly designed as alternatives to dominant wire services such as the AP and Reuters (Hong, 2011; Potter, 2019). Scholars also recognize Al-Jazeera (Arabic and English) and new East Asian media centers as potential origin points for contra-flows (Keane, 2006; Sakr, 2007; Wu, 2013). In some cases, the contra-flow is literal, as Western networks use the visual feeds of Al-Jazeera to compensate for their lack of on-site resources (Wessler & Adolphsen, 2008). While additional news sources may diversify the spread of ideas, "an interview with an Indian businessman may not offer a significantly different vision on the importance of free market policies to that of a Wall Street banker" (Painter, 2008, p. 24). Additionally, treating nations as containers of media elides the heterogeneity of societies (Beck, 2005). Some scholars argue that media, both national and global, are converging on neoliberal messaging and reporting styles (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012; Chakravartty & Schiller, 2010). As such, other dimensions of counter-hegemony can be detected by examining broadcasters' content. These studies are needed to fully understand the ways in which an IB might be counter-hegemonic and not only a contra-flow.

Scholars found mixed evidence for counter-hegemony when studying IB content. Figenschou's works (2010, 2011, 2012) emphasize AJE's reporting of news stories in the global South and their use of nongovernmental sources. However, she also argues that AJE's content often focuses on violence and conflict, reenforcing negative stereotypes of that region. Deviation in sourcing arguably extends to news' visual storytelling and the subject the viewer is invited to identify (Chouliaraki, 2010; Zelizer, 2007). Comparative examination of AJE and BBC, the latter viewed as a hegemonic news outlet, shows that AJE contrasts itself with greater parity in sources and "lexical and contextual equity" in its depiction of power dynamics, emphasizing the linguistic dimension of power (Barkho, 2011, p. 37). Additional analyses of AJE and BBC coverage of the 2009 Iranian presidential election suggest that correspondents' connections to specific nation-states lead to divergent interpretations of the Iranian political system (Kasmani, 2014). Alternatively, analysis of BBC and AJE coverage suggests that shared professional beliefs and a lack of access to conservative Iranian viewpoints led to a convergence of coverage (Kasmani, 2013). Comparisons of AJE and Iran's Press TV reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

showed that while both networks used pro-Palestinian frames they generated "war journalism," which makes armed conflict appear normal or inevitable (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014). Painter's (2008) and Robertson's (2014) analyses of RT and Telesúr (Venezuela), respectively, confirm that self-proclaimed counter-hegemonic networks are not uniform in their approaches.

Analyses of DW, CCTV, and RT are rarer and do not examine content, but suggest other dimensions of counter-hegemony. Newsroom analyses, while not the focus here, indicate that organizational culture shapes story selection and content. While RT's goals have changed since its founding, analyses of this television network suggest that it selects stories based on their likelihood to foster "chaos" in the West (Borchers, 2011; Elswah & Howard, 2020). DW's newsroom demonstrated contradictory journalism values, which led to professional conflict between German and non-German staff (Silcock, 2002). Some of CCTV's journalists have claimed their goal is to carry Chinese ideas to the West (Zhu, 2012).

The preceding studies illustrate the role of networks' funding structure and journalism culture. As government-sponsored broadcasters, each receives money from its sponsoring state; however, this does not necessarily reflect direct state control. The Bundestag funds DW annually but the news channel is protected from government interference ("About Us," 2022; Geniets, 2013). In contrast, both CCTV and RT operate within authoritarian political systems with high levels of political control over media (Meng & Rantanen, 2015; Vartanova, 2012, 2015; Zhao, 2012). The state reportedly controls 80% of Russian media either through direct ownership, subsidy, or through informal rules that limit acceptable political conversation (Sakwa, 2014). Some reporting suggests that RT's Editor-and-Chief has a direct line to the Kremlin (Shuster, 2015). The actual level of funding for CCTV is not available, but Shambaugh (2013), citing an interview he conducted with Qiao Mu of the Beijing Foreign Studies University, claimed that the 2009 budget for the "Big Four" Beijing-based outlets was RMB 60 billion or USD 8.79 billion. All news media in China are officially state run, though this does not mean that there is ideological homogeneity in the Chinese media system (Zhao, 2012). AJE resides in a country with poor domestic press freedom but more freedoms for AJE staff. Al-Jazeera's funding comes from the Emir of Qatar through a grant system, with some revenue through advertising and cable fees, though precise numbers can be difficult to come by (Geniets, 2013). The Emir reportedly gives an annual grant of USD 100 million to the network (Powers, 2012). Each broadcaster is financially and legally tied to their state sponsor in different ways. Finally, journalists represent another dimension of news production (Hanusch & Obijiofor, 2008). As Robertson (2014) argues, "Understanding power relations [between media and other actors] should thus maintain an analytical distinction between" media institutions and the journalists who staff them (p. 55).

The literature suggests there are several dimensions of counter-hegemony in global news: Contra-flow, nonelite sourcing, coverage of the under-covered, journalism culture, and deviation from ideological norms. However, we "lack insight into the what their 'contra' nature consists of" (Figenschou, 2013, p. 90). Dimensions such as contra-flow might suggest the existence of counter-hegemony but are not dispositive as they does not address the "what." Others such as news sources and news framing and discourse suggest a deeper engagement with counter-hegemony. These dimensions still require a baseline against which their deviation from hegemonic norms can be tested. Scholarship has identified a "protest paradigm" in Western news coverage of citizen that can serve as a baseline.

Protests and Counter-Hegemonic Potentials

Because there are multiple dimensions to counter-hegemony, it is necessary to develop a baseline of news production and content to illuminate their presence in news content. Analyzing news coverage of protests provides a test of the counter-hegemonic potential of IBs for several reasons. First, protesters actively seek media attention through spectacle, which ensures that there is a higher likelihood that the selected networks will cover a protest (Delicath & DeLuca, 2003; DeLuca & Peeples, 2002). Second, protests challenge the status quo, providing IBs an opportunity to support or undermine protester claims. Third, protests attract actors who are both for and against a status quo, and thus clear positions for journalists to source and air on broadcasts. Finally, analysis of mainstream news coverage of protest shows a consistent pattern. If an IB does provide counter-hegemonic journalism, it will deviate from the protest paradigm.

Traditional mass media coverage of protest movements follows a "protest paradigm," which frames protest movements as deviant from the mainstream, foregrounding issues of public safety and disruption, thereby marginalizing them. Skonieczny and Morse (2014) found that news frames focused on violence, deviance of protesters, showing "remarkable consistency in media portrayal of social movements and protests to the detriment of the various causes and in support of the status quo" (p. 676). For example, framing analysis of antiglobalization protests directed at the World Bank in American print and broadcast media from 1999 to 2000 found four frames were present in coverage, and all marginalized the protesters (Boykoff, 2006). Media produced frames of violence/disruption focused on clashes between police and protesters as well as freak frames that identified the protesters as deviant or outside the norm. Protesters were also framed as ignorant of global trade and capitalism's benefits, as well as having too many grievances and thus no clear goal. Coverage of Occupy Wall Street in American newspapers focused on official sources, showed public disdain of the protest, and emphasized public disorder (Xu, 2013).

The consistency of the protest paradigm provides a means to test the counter-hegemonic possibilities of IBs. The four frames, violence/disorder, ignorance of society, incoherence of goals, and freakishness/deviance function as a baseline for traditional news outlets. If Russian, Chinese, and other IBs are counter-hegemonic as they and scholars claim then they should deviate from these norms.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the coverage of four IBs for specific dimensions of counter-hegemony. I collected news items, indicated by introductory statements from studio anchors, as the unit of analysis (Figenschou, 2010). Figenschou's (2010) and Robertson's (2014) coding schemes target two dimensions of counter-hegemony, and thus clarify the specific aspects of counter-hegemony this study works to uncover. I combined Figenschou's (2010) and Robertson's (2014) coding schemas to code for the identity or role of a speaker and the stylistic features of a news item respectively. "Official sources, associated with the government and the state, enjoy crucial advantages in the competition for news access," and determining the degree to which nonelites appear in the news is a meaningful way an IB can distinguish itself from its competitors (Figenschou, 2013, p. 107). Coding for the speaker type and their organizational affiliation enables a deeper examination of their elite or nonelite status and suggests what types of sources journalists seek when they craft news items. Table 1 shows the specific features.

Table 1. Coding Scheme.

Demographics	Speaker Types	News Item Features	Protest Paradigm
Name of Speaker	Political: Members of political parties, activist groups, and those serving in government	Issue: Main topic of a given story, found in the lead	Violence/disorder: Item emphasizes violence or disorder caused by protest
Organizational affiliation (found in the chyron at the bottom of the screen)	Economic: Businesspeople and owners, bankers, and economists working in the private or public sector	In-studio: Item occurred only in the newsroom	Ignorant of society: Items labels protesters as uncaring of general society's interests
Gender	Experts: Researchers and academics	On-site: Items filmed outside the studio where the news item occurred	Incoherent: Item frames protestor goals as unclear
Nationality	Ordinary: Vox populi/person on the street interviews	Studio interview: Focused primarily on interviews with singular subjects in studio	Freakish/deviant: Item describes protestors as outside of the mainstream of society
Network on which they appeared		On-site interview: Focused primarily on interviews with singular subjects out of studio	Sources: Elite or nonelite
		Mixture: News item combined some or all of these four other categories	

Data Collection and Analysis

I selected four networks for analysis: AJE, CCTV, DW, and RT. I based this selection on their stated counter-hegemonic editorial positions and their geography: one from the Middle East, one from East Asia, one from Europe, and one from Eurasia. Furthermore, each network operates under different political systems ranging from a one-party state in China, a constitutional monarchy in Qatar to both liberal and illiberal democracies in Germany and Russia, respectively. Sampling from broadcasters in sponsoring states with various political systems suggests that any detected patterns of coverage are more likely to be related to news practices than government influence.

Next, I developed a list of protests that occurred within six months of my initial January–March 2015 study period used in my original work (Toula, 2017). I selected three protests coded as Umbrella, Brazil, and the Greek Bailout. The German Blockupy anti-austerity protests also received coverage during the Greek

protests and are therefore included, however, these protests lack a complete week's worth of coverage in the data.

It is worth taking a moment to describe each protest in turn to illuminate its suitability for study. The Umbrella protests from late 2014 to early 2015 were part of the long-running disputes between the government in Beijing and democracy activists in Hong Kong. These protests have both political and economic dimensions according to City University of Hong Kong's David Zweig: "The conservatives, the tycoons, the business elite can really control the legislature and prevent any kind of social welfare policy . . . Beijing has to realize that they have a social problem" (as cited in Schroeder, 2014, para. 12). The Brazilian protests stem from class divisions in Brazilian society and accusations of political corruption at the state oil firm Petrobras ("Brazilian Leader," 2016) and a recent recession and weak economy (Watts, 2016). The Greek Bailout protests are part of long-running conflict over austerity measures designed to address the Greek debt crisis (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). Protestors directed their anger toward the authors of austerity, the EU, International Monetary Fund, and European Central Bank (Triandafyllou & Tagaris, 2015). Likewise, the Blockupy protests occurred at the opening of the new European Central Bank headquarters in Frankfurt, as a protest against austerity policies and the then-current German government (Kutter, 2014).

Several of the selected protests directly affected IB state sponsors. The Umbrella protests directly challenged the Chinese one-party state while the Greek Bailout and Blockupy protests were directed at the EU and Germany specifically. Russia, while not directly affected, is interested in undermining the EU. The Brazilian protests were not directed at any sponsor. Because these protests affected state sponsors unevenly it is possible to examine how an IB might cover protests that criticize their sponsor, their rival, or a neutral state.

Using the global news archive at the Institutionen för Mediestudier at Stockholm University, I collected data from the regular evening newscast aired at 7:00 pm Central European Time (CET). Given the daily production of evening newscasts, the number of news items devoted to each protest illustrates the salience of the story for network managers. While data collection found $n = 807$ total news items, some programming changes limited the amount of useful content. For example, DW shifted its programming to cover environment, science, and culture, and CCTV replaced its global newscast with one focused on Asia in July. Nevertheless, I followed the above coding procedure, first coding for the news item's "issue" to determine whether a given item's focus was on one of the four selected protests. This procedure yielded $n = 51$ news items for analysis. I then applied the coding scheme seen in Table 1: Demographics, Speaker Types, News Item Features, and Protest Paradigm. The $n = 51$ relevant news items were then organized by protest and network to test the potential counter-hegemonic dimensions in each item. This process allowed for quantitative comparison across networks and over the course of the study period. I then examined each speaker's organizational affiliations and source quotations to test adherence to the protest paradigm more fully.

Study Period

The date range for each protest centered on specific events such as strikes, civil disorder, and protest actions that drew the attention of broadcasters. For example, the Greek Bailout negotiations and

vote led to strikes on July 15, 2015. To ensure that reporting and coverage of events leading to and following the event were included, data from newscasts on the preceding and subsequent three days were analyzed. In the case of the Greek Bailout, this meant collecting each network's newscast from July 12 to July 18. The study period for the Umbrella protests runs from September 28 to October 4 and centers on the first use of police violence on protesters. The study on the Brazil protests centers on an antigovernment rally and includes the period from March 12 to March 18. This also included a progovernment rally. The March newscasts also encompassed the Blockupy protests on March 18 in Germany. While the three subsequent days of Blockupy protests were not coded, the previous three days were. While this is a limitation, these news items were also coded and analyzed.

Findings

Previous scholarship on IBs used counter-hegemony implicitly; I focus on two dimensions of counter-hegemony explicitly. What Figenschou (2013) calls "media-elite relations" focuses on journalistic sourcing strategies that is, who is invited to speak on the news (p. 111). Sources who exist outside of political consensus or speak against such consensus reflect counter-hegemony in a new item. I also examine the degree to which the news items conform to or deviate from the protest paradigm. This reflects the possibility that a broadcaster's content could be counter-hegemonic in terms of news production, framing, and ideology.

Counter-Hegemony Under Doubt

Table 2 shows the distribution of coverage across each network. The Umbrella protests in Hong Kong received the most coverage with 37 news items or 74% of the total. CCTV devoted its sole attention to this protest with 16 news items, reflecting the importance of the event to the network. The longer the protests went on, the more coverage CCTV provided. On September 30, CCTV aired two items on the protests. By October 3, CCTV had aired six news items on the protests. AJE, DW, and RT also devoted the most attention to the Umbrella protests, but, as I explore below, the different ways in which they were covered suggest divergent interests at play.

Table 2. News Item Distribution.

Protests	AJE	CCTV	DW	RT
Blockupy	1	0	1	1
Brazil	2	0	1	0
Greece	1	0	3	4
Umbrella (Hong Kong)	11	16	5	5
Total	15	16	10	10

Of the other protests, the Brazil protest and Blockupy received the least coverage while the Greece crisis received a total of eight items. AJE covered the Greek protests only once, DW covered these events three times, and RT covered them four times; again, suggesting increased salience. As a key Greek creditor, Germany was directly implicated in the Greek crisis. While Russia did not have a direct financial stake in the

bailout talks, its efforts to destabilize its European neighbors suggest the possibility that the attention given by RT was not simply a matter of journalistic interest (Borchers, 2011; Elswah & Howard, 2020).

The distribution of speaker types also illustrates that each network arguably did not live up to its counter-hegemonic potential. Table 3 shows that there was a total of 77 speakers in all the network coverage of the protests. Of those, 37 (48%) were political speakers. Most speakers came from mainstream political institutions such as the Greek minister of labor Panos Skourletis and the chief executive of Hong Kong, C. Y. Leung. Experts comprised 18 speakers while economic actors totaled 10 speakers. In all, speakers from mainstream authority comprised 84% of all total speakers. While some speakers, including three on RT, were protesters, the overall number skews heavily toward traditional authorities even in networks that claim a counter-hegemonic editorial position. Interestingly, ordinary people comprised 12 speakers, suggesting potentially counter-hegemonic news practices. But their quoted statements fit neatly into the protest paradigm focusing on deviance, lawlessness, and public order.

Table 3. Speaker Type Distribution.

Speaker	AJE	CCTV	DW	RT	Total
Political	12	4	8	13	37
Economic	3	3	1	3	10
Expert	8	8	2	0	18
Ordinary	6	6	0	0	12
Worker	0	0	0	0	0
Total	29	21	11	16	77

Finally, Table 4 shows that most networks confined their coverage to in-studio reporting either as a simple news reading or an in-studio interview. CCTV, which only covered the Umbrella protests, did so 13 times from the studio, featuring prerecorded remarks from government officials, but only two times on-site. These reports were never filmed close to the protest and instead focused on business districts disrupted by the protests. In contrast, AJE covered the Umbrella protests seven times at the site of the protests, providing viewers with visuals of the event. RT covered the Umbrella protests only from their studio in Moscow, but covered the Greek and Blockupy protests in a mixed format, combining studio and on-site reporting four times. Chouliaraki (2010) argues that on-site reporting, combined with interviews of named subjects, invites viewers to identify with the subjects of the news. As such, RT's on-the-ground efforts to cover the European protests and CCTV's literal removal of protesters from the frame suggest a specific objective underlying their editorial decision making.

Table 4. News Item Visual Type by Network.

News Item Features	AJE	CCTV	DW	RT
Studio	1	13	6	5
On-site	8	2	2	0
Studio Interview	3	1	1	0
Mixture	3	1	1	4
Total	15	17	10	9

Speakers in the sample belonged, overwhelmingly, to positions of authority. However, belonging to a traditional institution is not dispositive; there are often politicians or economists who oppose government policy or ideology. Examination of speakers' organizational affiliations, a news item's visual features, and representative speakers' quotations shows that most news items undermined protestors' claims and followed the protest paradigm. Quotations emphasized violence on the part of protestors, their lack of mainstream acceptance, and the cost of their disruption to society.

AJE aired comments from various sources which routinely undermined protester messages. AJE's Umbrella reports featured Leticia Lee, a member of the Blue Ribbon Campaign.[2] Lee characterized protesters' unwillingness to engage in dialogue with C. Y. Leung, the chief executive of Hong Kong, as antidemocratic, and encouraged the "silent majority" to speak out. Experts frequently suggested that the Umbrella protests harmed small-business owners and Hong Kong's economy, and AJE interviewed Simon Wong, a restaurant owner whose business was struggling because of the protests. In their coverage, AJE featured political speakers such as Chinese President Xi Jinping, spokeswoman Hua Chun-Ying of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and European Central Bank president Mario Draghi.

Only three protestors appeared on the network across all protests, and their positions were undermined by correspondents. In a March 18 (AJE, 2015a) report on Blockupy, Dominic Kane interviewed an unnamed male protestor who advocated for Europeans to fight austerity policies. Kane claimed that such views belonged to "some" protestors and the report juxtaposed the protestor with a press conference held by Mario Draghi, the bank's president, claiming it "has always been understood" that austerity is the fault of individual nations (AJE, 2015a, 5:15). The item concluded with Kane standing before the camera referencing Draghi's views on spending and saying, "This isn't enough for the protestors" (AJE, 2015a, 6:00). The protest paradigm suggests that protestors are framed as a "deviant group of outsiders" (Brasted, 2005, p. 387). In another item from July 13 on the Greek Bailout, reporter Mohammad Jamjoom says, "There is anger but also weariness" with protests (AJE, 2015b, 2:35). These and other items appear to limit protestors' claims to validity, placing them outside the mainstream.

DW's coverage likewise conformed to the protest paradigm in terms of speaker selection with notable adherence in their coverage of the Greek protests. DW featured eight government speakers of 11 total speakers. During their coverage of the Umbrella protests, DW aired three speakers in total and twice

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[2] The Blue Ribbon Campaign is a counter-protest of the Umbrella Movement, whose supporters wear blue in contrast to Umbrella's yellow ribbons (Liu, 2015).

presented C. Y. Leung's media briefings. DW's coverage of the Greek Bailout also featured numerous political speakers, most notably the then Greek president Alexis Tsipras. In the sourced press conferences, Tsipras made it clear that while he opposed the bailout deal, he had no choice but to implement it. When several politicians resigned over the deal, allied River Party politician Stavros Theodorakis proclaimed the Greek Parliament had "political conspirators, populist, and rats, who conspire against you [Tispras]" (DW, 2015, 4:30). DW highlighted this normative voice, excluding the others.

DW sourced economic actors to undermine protesters. For example, the network interviewed restauranteur Klonos Nikos as he watched domestic television reports of unrest during a July 16 broadcast. Nikos aimed his anger at the previous government and their economic policy, not the current government and its reforms. DW's coverage, therefore, featured speakers who undermined protests from political and economic perspectives. The reporter concluded the item by saying that there was public disapproval of "heavy clashes between police and demonstrators," but that businesspeople like Nikos saw no other option (DW, 2015, 5:15).

CCTV used various experts to suggest the protests were illegal or damaging to Hong Kong's economy. For example, Raymond Yeung, an economist with ANZ Banking Group, argued that small businesses would suffer profit losses. The news item continued, reporting that the Hong Kong Stock Exchange had lost valuation in line with Merrill Lynch, which said Hong Kong would experience $500 million of lost economic activity. CCTV also leveraged interviews with foreign experts and journalists to frame the protests. *The Guardian* journalist Martin Jacques highlighted Britain's undemocratic rule in Hong Kong. Miguel Alfredo Velloso of the University of Salvador points to the increased influence, wealth, and status Hong Kong received as a gateway to mainland China. CCTV sourced political figures in their coverage, including C. Y. Leung and Hua Chun-Ying, in addition to media briefings with Hong Kong police officials.

CCTV also used counter-protesters to frame the Umbrella Movement as "illegal," as when an "HK resident" said the protesters do not understand the law and cannot "even name the color of the cover of the law book" (CCTV, 2014a, 3:11).[3] The counter-protester further claimed that the protesters were not qualified for democratic politics and said they were "being used." CCTV aired the video of another resident who lamented that while the protesters had been "rational" at the beginning of events, they needed to cease their "disorderly conduct." Finally, CCTV aired footage of the social media figure "Worried Hong Kong Uncle," subtitled in English, saying, "Your parents and family want you home and are worried about you," and claiming that protest supporters desired political "instability" (CCTV, 2014b, 4:00). In all, CCTV's resources provided counter programming to the protesters that falls in line with the protest paradigm while promoting their state interests.

RT's reporting of both Blockupy and Greek Bailout protests was decidedly proprotest and strongly reflected protesters' message and grievances. For example, news items on both the Greece Bailout and Blockupy used a mix of studio and on-site reporting, often with cameramen and journalists in the thick of the marches themselves. RT coverage also distinguished itself not simply in the kinds of

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[3] The speaker was referring to the Basic Law, the constitutional document for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China.

speakers it featured, but also in the ways it arranged them in its coverage. Like DW, RT aired remarks from traditional authorities, like President Tsipras and Mario Draghi. But when viewed holistically their sources represented greater, though inconsistent, ideological diversity. This includes left-wing politicians, unnamed protesters, and one member of the far-right party Golden Dawn, which had recently gained seats in parliament (Smith, 2015). RT used these speakers to emphasize the disunion between officials, the government, and citizens while highlighting the harm done to Greece by austerity. The reporting juxtaposed the views of national leaders to leading EU leaders. RT used European leaders such as Belgian parliamentarian Lode Vanoost, to provide quotations such as, "Ideologues are willing to put the EU at risk just to make a point about countries staying in line with their vision of EU" (RT, 2015, 2:15). RT also interviewed protestors, one of whom was quoted as saying the EU is "not a home of the people it is a prison for workers' rights" (RT, 2015, 6:10) In contrast, RT's coverage of the Umbrella protests was conducted only in the studio and was limited to quoting Chinese press releases that claimed the protests were illegal. Unlike the other networks analyzed here, RT avoided the tropes of the protest paradigm, focusing on the conflict between national and international political leaders and highlighting the views of the protesters. However, this deviation was highly selective and focused on EU member states. This makes it the only network analyzed here to deviate from the protest paradigm.

Discussion

Scholarly literature demonstrates that there are multiple dimensions that researchers examined when trying to determine whether media content is counter-hegemonic. However, the data analyzed here suggest that no one dimension on its own is sufficient to understand new global media outlets holistically. As such, unpacking each dimension and illustrating how the data analyzed here complicate the concept of counter-hegemony is a necessary step in fleshing out the concept.

Some scholars have identified contra-flow as a critical dimension of counter-hegemony (Boyd-Barrett & Xie, 2008; Rantanen, 2007; Thussu, 2007). Broadcasters from Russia, China, and Qatar are contra-flows when they are consumed in the developed world. However, flows, even contra ones, do not tell us if the content challenges hegemony, or for that matter whose hegemony. While CCTV's content provided a counter-narrative to protestors, the other networks did not deviate from content norms such as the protest paradigm. The site of production and the flow of the content are important aspects of counter-hegemony, but on their own, not enough to detect it.

Figenschou's (2013) focus on who is sourced in the news, both their status as elites and the places they are from, provides fruitful ground for detecting counter-hegemony in news content. When IBs cover their own regions and sources, they are diversifying global news (Chouliaraki, 2010; Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014). But the data here show that Figenschou (2010) and Sakr (2007) were right to argue that it takes more than geography to be counter-hegemonic. Sources continued to be drawn from the elites of governments, businesses, and academia. Protestors rarely spoke and when they did journalists framed protests as disturbances to social order. Additionally, networks showed consistency in ideological terms. Sources in each network emphasized economic loss, the necessity for austerity, or public weariness. They did this even when there was no apparent direct state interest, as when DW covered the Umbrella Movement, using the protest paradigm. Nevertheless, the outlier network's coverage is instructive.

RT's coverage of the Greek Bailout and Blockupy deviated from the protest paradigm by featuring protestors who opposed austerity and "neoliberalism." But deviation from the protest paradigm should not be considered an indication of a clear counter-hegemonic voice when motives are questionable. RT's coverage of Blockupy and the Greek Bailout did side with the protesters and against proausterity political leaders. While these might be views outside of the mainstream and in contrast to the other networks' coverage, RT's opposition lacked ideological consistency, drawing from the far-left and far-right to contextualize the Bailout talks. Rather, they support Russia's larger communication strategy elevating voices outside the Western mainstream to undercut its rivals, including Germany ("Putin Wages," 2016; Snyder, 2018). Along each dimension of counter-hegemony, we see plausible considerations that complicate simple analysis.

The geopolitical origin of each network is also important to consider. RT's unique form of international broadcasting, coupled with a protest involving its German rival, opened up space for counter-hegemonic reporting on the Greek Bailout and Blockupy. Meanwhile, DW's editorial independence did not open up space for proprotestor coverage even when the protest occurred in authoritarian states like China. While a complete explanation cannot be gathered from content only, we can suggest which factors are at play. Perhaps journalism practices exemplified by the protest paradigm shaped German coverage. Alternatively, German trade relations with China might have played a role in tempering criticism. The disconnect between DW and RT's content does suggest that to fully account for divergences in reporting norms it is necessary to open up scholarship on counter-hegemony to a wider array of evidence.

If counter-hegemony is to have value, it should be operationalized holistically and placed within the larger concept of news flows. First, studies must consider the dimensions of counter-hegemony discussed here, in addition to new dimensions scholars might develop. Counter-hegemonic media would challenge taken-for-granted power relations. Each dimension should be clearly explicated along those lines. Simple differences, such as sites of production, may be valuable but are not enough on their own. Second, content is only one aspect of news production. Studies of content have "left the *process* of news flow unexplained" (Figenschou, 2013, p. 89). That is to say, the process of situated journalism production, in both the newsroom and in the field, has been very poorly studied (Hanusch & Obijiofor, 2008). This also includes audience reception studies (Painter, 2008). Future studies should access these parts of the news flow and work to explicate journalism practices and their relationship to media power dynamics of the news more fully. Relatedly, and finally, if flows are to be useful as a dimension of counter-hegemony, then we must examine how flows interact with subnational audiences. RT's content draws Western audiences with views they do not necessarily see at home.

Limitations and Future Research

There are some important limitations to this study that must be discussed to contextualize the relevant findings and suggest avenues for future research. First, size and skewness of the sample limits generalizability. The findings need to be validated in future studies with larger sample periods and sizes. For example, CCTV devoted full coverage only to the Umbrella protest. Meanwhile, coverage of the Brazil protest was limited to three items across all broadcasters. This means that some protests are not as valuable as others for comparison while others are overrepresented. The skewness of the sample is the result of difficulties in accessing regular newscast content and the relative limits of the study period. That said, the

absence of reporting is also suggestive as to the editorial interests of each network as well as their technical capabilities. Any network could have accessed wire services and official public statements to fill in studio time, as RT did with the Umbrella protests. When a network completely avoids coverage, there may be many salient factors at play, such as editorial interest (Elswah & Howard, 2020), newsworthiness factors (Silcock, 2002), and technical capabilities (Hong, 2011).

While the comparative framework applied here is relatively unusual in analyses of IBs, it arguably does not go far enough. The twenty-first century has seen numerous new IBs launched by states like Iran, Venezuela, France, and others (Kuhn, 2010; Seib, 2005). While the findings here suggest the limits of new IBs' counter-hegemony, it remains possible that other networks might consistently apply some or all dimensions of counter-hegemony. Future studies should compare many networks over longer periods of time to unpack the content produced and attempt to understand the organization and incentives that lead to it.

Conclusions

New IBs such as RT, CCTV, and AJE promised to present the world in fresh new ways, to give "voice for the voiceless" as AJE put it ("What We," 2020, para. 1). However, we have also seen that IBs' founding motivation often derives from grievances of the state sponsor and the perception that they are not receiving enough attention or legitimacy in global media. These grievances, coupled with raw geopolitical calculation, spurred the development of new IBs in the 1990s and 2000s. The expansion is striking and certainly increases the options for viewers of international broadcasting.

But the protestation that IBs fill an important gap in the global information system must be viewed with a more critical eye. While the Anglo-American dominated global news world certainly has many failings, labeling any alternative counter-hegemonic elides both the hard facts of geopolitics and the situatedness of newsroom practice. For all the protests network coverage conformed to the protest paradigm, undermining protester claims, and placed these claims outside society and the law. When shown in reports, protesters were challenged by anchors and reporters. In their place, politicians, experts, and businesspeople urged caution, chided, and decried their loss of income. Reporters emphasized disorder rather than injustice. When a protest threatened state interests, as with the Greece Bailout or Umbrella Movement, conformity to the protest paradigm served the interests of the state. Only when a rival state experienced civil disorder did one network, RT, deviate from the paradigm in a now well-known pattern of sowing chaos via cynical messaging. This illustrates the important geopolitical role of, and receptivity of Western audiences to, counter-hegemonic messaging.

IBs can be trusted news sources depending on the circumstances—see the role of *Voice of America* during the Tiananmen Square protests or of AJE during the Arab Spring. But we should be circumspect about their counter-hegemonic potential, given their connection to state actors. These outlets are, first and foremost, funded by states to achieve state objectives. Those operating in authoritarian contexts do not have editorial independence from their governments. When the situation calls for it, these networks may well serve nonjournalistic interests. Instead, I suggest that we reconsider the nature of counter-hegemony. Originally, and for the time being accurately, the concept drew from world systems theory and emphasized

the outsized power of the West generally, and America particularly, in media flows. Transformations in the global information environment cannot simply be viewed as the West dominating a supine rest. Growth of foreign media industries, social media communication, and a lack of trust in traditional media outlets complicate such a vision. Additionally, if simply not being Western is enough to convey counter-hegemonic potential, how can scholars make normative claims of content from RT and CCTV, which legitimize violence, aggression, or the suppression of human and civil rights? While flows are important, counter-hegemony in journalism should also be conceptualized in terms of journalistic practice and content creation. Simple criticism or opposition to a hegemonic center does not indicate, in itself, opposition to relations of domination operating at different levels or scales in the world system. Counter-hegemony can be a valuable concept for elucidating the ways in which power plays out in the work of journalism around the world. However, the ways in which it conceptualizes power should be more fully developed.

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