

COMMENTARY

Hegemonic Shadows: USA, China and Dewesternising Media Studies

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Arguing that the current crisis has its closest analogy in the years 1914–1945 this contribution locates the origin of the discipline in work on propaganda studies undertaken by Walter Lippmann, Edward L. Bernays and H.D. Laswell. Both periods witnessed huge economic shocks within a long period of economic instability and the context of a shift in influence away from one dominant world power. The prognosis this parallel offers is a very gloomy prospect when the global hegemon (now the USA) is challenged on all fronts, perhaps even militarily.

Mass communication studies (mainstream and Frankfurt School) during this earlier period originated from a concern with propaganda's effects and how it had achieved undesirable social outcomes. Cultural Studies may look important from Goldsmiths and Westminster Universities but is marginal from the perspective of much of the USA (and the Hong Kong) mainstream academy. Attempts to understand new media and the collapse of mass communications operate in the shadow of this larger historical shift where existing social relations are tending to shape digital media (despite its progressive potential) into reproducing the dominant social order. Dewesternising media studies has not got very far but historical momentum rather than technology per se may be the deciding factor.

Keywords: Propoganda; mass communication effects; China; USA; dewesternising; global crisis; digital media



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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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