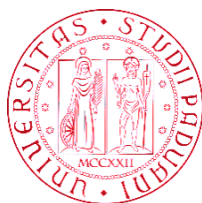


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**Master's degree in
European and Global Studies**



**POLITICS OF REPRESENTATIONS IN THE
MEDIA AND INTERCULTURAL
UNDERSTANDING:
A CRITICAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the politics of representations in the media and its implications for intercultural understanding, employing a critical theory perspective. Drawing on critical theory's insights into power dynamics, discourse analysis, and cultural hegemony, the study explores how media representations shape perceptions of different cultures and contribute to the construction of dominant narratives. By using Iran as a case study, the study investigates how Western media representations contribute to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Through a critical analysis of media coverage of Iranian events, including the protests triggered by the murder of Mahsa Amini, the study reveals the ways in which Western media portray Iran as closed-off and incompatible with Western norms, while silencing alternative perspectives from within Iran. Also, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of media in shaping intercultural perceptions and dialogue. It argues that media discourse serves as a platform for critical thinking and self-awareness, influencing notions of independence and self-determination. By critically analyzing media representations through a lens of Critical theory, the study aims to promote greater awareness of the power dynamics at play in media discourse and foster more nuanced cross-cultural understanding.

Key words: Critical theory, Representation, Media

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Throughout the world history, humanity has continuously pursued development, seeking to advance both scientifically and socio-culturally. This search has been driven by an inherent desire to comprehend, interpret, and influence the world around. However, the journey of human development has not always been smooth or straightforward. It has often been marked by conflicts, social disparities, and contradictions, requesting the need for a critical examination of prevailing realities.

In today's globalized world, where information flows freely across borders, the media plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of different cultures and societies. The representations of these cultures in the media influence how people are interacting and understanding people from diverse backgrounds. However, these representations are not neutral, often influenced by underlying power dynamics, cultural biases, and political agendas. This thesis examines the politics of representations in the media and its implications for intercultural understanding, with a Critical theory perspective. Critical theory provides a powerful framework for understanding the complexities of media representations and their impact on society. Rooted in the Frankfurt School tradition, critical theory seeks to uncover the underlying power structures that shape social, political, and cultural phenomenon. It challenges dominant narratives and ideologies, offering a critical lens through which to analyze media discourse and its effects on intercultural relations. Moreover, Critical theory offers valuable insights into how media representations can be employed to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue. By deconstructing dominant narratives and challenging stereotypes, critical theory opens up space for diverse voices and perspectives to be heard. Critical theory provides an opportunity to reevaluate the relationships between modern societies and dominant powers, both political and cultural. Additionally, it allows for an examination of the relationship between mass media production and the standardization of personalities. The Dialectic of Enlightenment remains a fundamental and relevant theory for understanding modern realities.

The instrumentalization of entities highlights the intricate ways in which power operates in society. Mass media, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping public

opinion, influencing societal norms, and perpetuating dominant ideologies. By understanding the mechanisms through which culture and media are utilized as tools of power, it's becoming possible gain insight into the dynamics of contemporary society and the challenges it presents.

1.2 Problem statement, methodology and limitations

This work aims to explore the phased emergence and consolidation of power dominance. It begins by examining colonial and postcolonial theories, delving into the historical processes of colonialism and imperialism that laid the groundwork for the development of critical theory. These theories reveal the power dynamics essential in colonial encounters and the following imposition of Western ideologies and structures on colonized societies.

Following this historical analysis, attention will turn to the “Dialectic of Enlightenment” of Jurgen Habermas and Theodor Adorno. Habermas's concept of the public sphere offers an understanding of the role of communication and discourse in shaping societal norms and power relations. Adorno's theory of the cultural industry, on the other hand, explores how mass media and popular culture contribute to the maintenance of dominant ideologies and the objectification of culture.

By examining these theoretical frameworks, this work seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which power operates in contemporary society. It aims to clarify how dominant powers have historically established and maintained control, and how these dynamics continue to shape an understanding of the world today. Through a step-by-step analysis, the interaction between historical processes, theoretical frameworks, and contemporary power dynamics will be illustrated, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of power dominance.

Iran was chosen as a case study, focusing primarily on Western media but also including examples from Iranian media. The objective is to demonstrate how dominant narratives can shape public opinion. By analyzing the creative practices employed by media outlets and providing background information on the historical relations between the West and Iran. Iran was selected as the central point of this research due to the complex and contentious nature of its relationship with the West throughout history. The events in Iran in 2022, particularly the protests triggered by the murder of Mahsa Amini,

serve as a compelling case study illustrating the influence of dominant narratives and power dynamics. The murder of Mahsa Amini and the subsequent protests highlight the challenges of recognizing and respecting diverse perspectives, as well as the dominance of Western perspectives in shaping the narrative surrounding Iranian affairs. This case was chosen to uncover the underlying issues of dominance within Iran and how they intersect with broader global dynamics, as viewed through the lens of Critical theory. By examining the power dynamics at play within the country and beyond, the study aims to provide insights into the complexities of dominance and resistance within contemporary society. Through this analysis, the aim is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how hegemonic forces operate and how they can be challenged.

In the fourth chapter, an exploration will be conducted into the various factors that shape individual identity amidst struggles, with a particular focus on how power dynamics influence this process. Understanding the formation of identity in such conditions requires an examination of the complex interaction between internal and external factors, including societal norms, cultural influences, and power structures. Power dynamics play a crucial role in shaping identity, as they determine the distribution of resources, opportunities, and social status within a given society. Individuals often navigate their identities within the framework of existing power structures, which can either empower or marginalize them based on their social position. For instance, by interrogating the role of power dynamics in this process, it's possible to gain insights into how individuals negotiate their identities within the broader context of societal structures and struggles. This chapter will delve into these complexities to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between power, identity, and struggle in shaping the human experience.

1.3 Research objectives and question

The research question guiding this study is: How can a critical analysis of the politics of representation in media contribute to the promotion of intercultural understanding and dialogue, and what are the possible implications? This research question underscores the importance of examining media representations through a Critical lens and explores how these representations impact perceptions, attitudes, and interactions between cultures.

The main objective of this thesis is to critically analyze the politics of representations in the media and its impact on intercultural understanding. To achieve this overarching goal, the research will focus on the following specific objectives:

1. To analyze the ways in which non-Western media outlets and governments resist the hegemonic power of Western media, using the concept of cultural imperialism as a lens for understanding the asymmetrical power relations between media systems;
2. To reconsider phenomenon of mass culture as a dominant power of a western media;
3. To analyze the impact of media competition on cultural diversity and pluralism, and how this affects the production and consumption of media content;
4. To investigate the potential of non-Western media resistance to challenge dominant Western narratives and foster alternative discourses, using Habermas' concept of communicative action as a framework for analyzing communicative power;
5. Through this research, the goal is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how media representations influence intercultural dynamics and to propose strategies for promoting more inclusive and accurate portrayals of diverse cultures.

A comprehensive analysis of the literature will provide a deeper and more systematic understanding of the various facets of the problem at hand. This analysis will offer invaluable insights into the research question and objectives, allowing for more nuanced and thorough answers. By synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying key themes the literature review will lay the foundation for addressing the research tasks effectively. Through this process, the study aims to provide a strong and deep exploration of the topic, exposing critical issues and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

2. Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study

2.1 Introduction to the concept of representation

In the contemporary landscape of media information dissemination, a nuanced examination of historical paradigms becomes imperative. This necessitates a comprehensive exploration of both colonial and decolonial perspectives to elucidate the underlying factors contributing to the pronounced disparities evident in media

representations. A critical analysis of this phenomenon entails an examination of the historical roots of dominant power structures, which actively mold and shape public opinion, often eliciting a degree of compliance that may be either conscious or unconscious, contingent upon the prevailing circumstances.

Moreover, within the realm of critical theory, an insightful investigation into the influence of imperialism on media representations emerges as particularly salient. This entails scrutinizing the historical processes by which imperialistic ideologies have informed and, at times, distorted the portrayal of events, individuals, and cultures in media narratives. By interweaving insights from critical theory and a decolonial perspective, a richer understanding of the intricate dynamics shaping media representations unfolds, shedding light on the conscious and subconscious mechanisms that perpetuate existing power structures in information dissemination (de Sousa Santos, 2015; 38).

The terms "Global South" and "Global North" which Boaventura de Sousa Santos highlight as a main concept and the main paradigm of observations. What does these concepts mean? Global South- It is an all-encompassing categorization of the regions which are ideologically, economically, politically and geographically excluded from dominant Global North (Western "elite club"). These countries possible to call in a diverse methods such as "with colonial experience", "non-western", "socially marginalized" or as granted by the author "Global South" (Ibid.; 39)

What is important to notice the author shows in his work that there is a circulation of knowledge and ideas in the "Global South", but the comprehensive influence of European views blocks the possibilities for discourse and challenging European postulates. Thus, without even opening a window of opportunity for alternative epistemologies (Ibid.;40)

In exploring the dynamics of knowledge exchange within the "Global South," the work suggests a noteworthy struggle against the dominant influence of European perspectives. Despite the evident flow of ideas, European viewpoints are portrayed as formidable barriers that impede the emergence of alternative epistemologies, creating a hindrance to meaningful discourse. In fact, this dominance of European postulates, as depicted, restricts the exploration of diverse intellectual landscapes. The evolution of Eurocentric critical theory has witnessed an abandoning of exclusive ownership of terms

that once defined its distinctiveness. On the condition that, in contemporary discussions, previously Eurocentric terms such as development and democracy have become integrated into broader narratives that encompass alternative, integral, inclusionary, participatory, deliberative, and sustainable perspectives. In other words, this linguistic shift reflects a broader transformation in discourse, challenging traditional boundaries and fostering a more inclusive and diverse dialogue on development and democracy.

The influence of the global North is diminishing economically, politically, and culturally. Despite this decline, there's a continued reliance on general theories and universal ideas to make sense of the world. This approach is increasingly viewed as an outdated manifestation of Western exceptionalism, particularly from an external perspective. The global North, after centuries of shaping the world, appears to struggle with learning from the experiences of the global South. Overall, this difficulty in learning is attributed to the legacy of colonialism, which seems to have disabled the global North from understanding the world in noncolonial terms. (de Sousa Santos, 2015; 41)

2.1.1 Colonial theory

The observations presented here are drawn from the perspectives outlined in "Globalization and the Decolonial Option," a book edited by Walter D. Mignolo. This book features contributions from a diverse group of Spanish and American authors, each presenting distinct perspectives on the intersections of colonization and modernity. (Mignolo & Escobar, 2013)

Anibal Quijano's (one of the authors) exploration of "Colonialism and Modernity/Rationality" states that European powers established a relationship of direct, political, social, and cultural dominance over the conquered populations across various continents. This form of domination is commonly referred to as Eurocentric colonialism. Admittedly, while the explicit and formal aspects of this colonial rule have largely been defeated, especially in regions like America, Asia, and Africa, a successor in the form of Western imperialism has emerged. (Quijano, 2007)

Unlike colonialism, Western imperialism is characterized more by an association of social interests among dominant groups—such as social classes or ethnicities—within countries with unevenly distributed power. This shift signifies a move away from external imposition to a more internally driven collaboration of interests.

Therefore, the specific colonial power structure gave rise to social discriminations that were later categorized as racial, ethnic, anthropological, or national, depending on the context, actors involved, and populations affected. Simultaneously, this power structure, which was and still is in place, serves as the comprehensive framework within which other social relations, such as those based on class or estate, operate. (Ibid.)

Although traditional political colonialism is no longer prevalent, a persistent form of cultural dominance characterizes the relationship between Western, or European, culture and other societies. Historical colonialism entailed the organized suppression of beliefs, ideas, images, symbols, and knowledge that diverged from the goals of global colonial control. Concurrently, the colonizers appropriated knowledge from the colonized, particularly in fields such as mining, agriculture, and engineering, while also reaping the benefits of their labor. The suppression predominantly aimed at inhibiting various modes of understanding, knowledge creation, perspectives, images, symbols, and systems of representation. Additionally, it extended to the manipulation of resources, patterns, and tools used for formalized and objectified expression, whether in intellectual or visual realms.

This initial repression was followed by the imposition of the rulers own expression patterns, beliefs, and images, particularly concerning the supernatural. These beliefs and images not only slowed the cultural production of the dominated but also served as effective means of social and cultural control once urgent repression became less constant and systematic. (Ibid.)

In the subchapter "The question of the production of knowledge" Quijano scrutinized the ongoing crisis of the European way of understanding knowledge, there's a challenge to its basic assumption: the idea that knowledge results from a subject-object relationship. Beyond the issues of approving knowledge, this assumption gives rise to additional problems, which are worth briefly exploring. In this view, the "subject" is seen as an isolated individual defined by its thoughts, while the "object" is an external entity with distinct properties. However, this perspective has flaws. It overly prioritizes individualism, overlooks the social context in knowledge production, and conflicts with current scientific views on dynamic relations. In a like manner, the assumed separation between "subject" and "object" is challenged by modern research revealing a deeper universal communication structure. "The "subject" is bearer of "reason", while the

"object", is not only external to it, but different nature. In fact, it is nature” (Quijano, 2007; 26-27)

The European way of thinking, developed during times of social and cultural conflicts, is marked by a focus on individualism and a lack of recognition for different perspectives. This viewpoint not only encourages a narrow view of society but also ignores the idea of a complete social picture. In particular, it allowed European colonial practices to sideline non-European cultures, establishing a hierarchy where only European culture was seen as rational and others were considered inferior. This "subject-object" relationship shaped how Europeans interacted with other cultures, limiting communication and the exchange of knowledge. Developed over five centuries, this mindset is a result of colonial dominance, where European colonial powers held control. In essence, the European way of thinking was not just a product of its time but was closely tied to a power structure upheld by colonial relations. (Ibid.)

Meanwhile, the development of European-Western rationality and modernity involved a complex relationship with religion, the church, and the restructuring of power in capitalist societies and nation-states. It also played a role in colonizing other parts of the world. On the condition that, development was influenced by an idea of social totality, viewing society as a closed system governed by a single logic. This perspective also contributed to two other notions: one viewing society as a functional system with a singular logic, and the other portraying society as an organic structure with hierarchical relations among its parts, similar to how organs function in the human body. (Quijano, 2007)

Consequently, European “way” or “standard” exerted pressure on Enlightenment process of its unsuccessful predecessors. The unfolding of the Enlightenment process was markedly Eurocentric, with its terms and ideals predominantly shaped by European perspectives. On the one hand, the concepts of "humanity" and "society" within this intellectual movement were tethered to Eurocentric paradigms, neglecting meaningful connections with non-Western societies. On the other hand, it is crucial to emphasize that the Enlightenment's discourse and understanding of fundamental terms were largely confined within the confines of Western thought. The universality ascribed to notions like "humanity" often overlooked the rich and diverse cultural landscapes outside of Europe, perpetuating a narrative that excluded non-Western societies from the broader

conversation. Eurocentric lens not only influenced the framing of Enlightenment ideals but also contributed to the marginalization of alternative worldviews and the experiences of societies beyond the Western sphere. This ruling power of Europe (West) began to dominate not only geographically and politically, but also became totalitarian rulers of knowledge and thought.(Quijano, 2007) Subsequently, Europe held a central role as the dominant force and intellectual hub in this worldview, embodying an attitude illustrated by the "white man's burden," as articulated by Kipling(Wells, 2011). The prevailing notion was that colonized peoples were the responsibility of Europeans.

This perspective portrayed society as a closed system characterized by a hierarchical structure and functional relationships, all guided by a distinct historical logic. It presupposed a singular historical trajectory and a rationality that subordinated each part to an overarching logic. Society was envisioned as a macro-historical entity with a foreseeable development and ultimate purpose over time. The ruling faction of this totality, representing Europe, embodied this historical logic, particularly in its relationship with the colonial world. (Quijano, 2007)

Taking everything into account, the essential role of European model critique is a pivotal necessity. Moreover, the critique should go beyond a simple rejection of all its concepts or dissolving reality into discourse. It's essential to break away from the connections between rationality/modernity and coloniality, particularly from any power that isn't based on the free decisions of individuals. The mistreat of reasons for power, especially colonial power, has led to "deformed" knowledge paradigms, undermining the liberating promises of modernity.

The alternate route is evident- demolishing the colonial underpinnings of global power. This starts with epistemological decolonization, embracing decoloniality, to pave the way for new intercultural communication. To be specific, this involves an exchange of experiences and meanings, forming the foundation for a different rationality that can legitimately claim some universality. (Quijano, 2007)

Unquestionably, liberating intercultural relations from the bounds of coloniality means allowing all peoples the freedom to choose their relations, individually or collectively. This includes the freedom to choose between various cultural directions and, most importantly, the freedom to create, critique, change, and exchange culture and

society. This liberation is part of the broader process of social liberation from all forms of power rooted in inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and domination (Ibid.)

2.1.2 Decolonial theory

Catherine Walsh delves into the transformation of the geopolitics of critical knowledge in her paper titled "Decolonial Thought and Cultural Studies: Others in the Andes", examining the coloniality as functioning as both a conceptual framework and a lived experience, constitutes a crucial backdrop for understanding alternative intellectual productions (Walsh, 2007). Despite the formal conclusion of colonialism marked by independence, coloniality endures as a power model. Indeed, its roots are embedded in the regulation of differences, a process that constructs and perpetuates hierarchies based on race, establishing a system of dominance and inferiority. Notably, this system played a pivotal role in organizing the population into explicit ranks, positions, and roles within the social power structure (Quijano, 2000).

Admittedly, the genesis of this codification coincided with colonialism and the hierarchical classification of social identities into various geographical and racial categories. Especially, the latter erased former cultural differences, but its impact endures.(Walsh, 2007) This effectiveness extends to what is termed the “coloniality of knowledge”- the prevailing Eurocentric perspective in knowledge, associating intellectual production with civilization, the authority of the written word, and a maintained racial hierarchy (Quijano, 2000).

Throughout the past five centuries, this construct, consistently strengthened, has contributed to the perception that certain communities are acknowledged less capable of engaging in profound "intellectual" thinking. Unfortunately, this viewpoint remains not only within dominant society but also among parts of various ideological groups. Within this framework, the Eurocentric and stereotyped aspects of critical thought take shape (Walsh, 2007).

Ramón Grosfoguel, in his work titled "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms,"(Grosfoguel, 2007) highlights an important idea in post-colonial transformation by distinguishing between "epistemic location" and "social location." Besides, by demonstrating on the disadvantaged side of power relations doesn't automatically mean having a subaltern perspective. Grosfoguel suggests that the success

of the modern colonial world-system is in shaping the thinking of individuals, even those socially located on the oppressed side, to align with dominant positions.

A pivotal consideration is the pervasive tendency of universalizing thoughts. To be more specific, this implies a global interconnectedness rooted in the westernization of minds. The extent of Western influence, and its capacity to shape perspectives, is immeasurable. In the contemporary era, territorial conquest may have become outdated given the remarkable achievements in technology and the overall development of the world. Therefore, the conquest, it seems, has shifted from physical territories to the conquest of minds (Grosfoguel, 2007).

Epistemic perspectives emerging from historically marginalized voices provide a crucial vantage point for a nuanced analysis of prevailing power dynamics. Delving into the European colonial expansion, a Eurocentric lens often portrays the genesis of the capitalist world-system as an outcome of fierce competition among European empires. This conventional narrative predominantly attributes the impetus for expansion to the pursuit of more direct trade routes to the East. However, when viewed through alternative epistemic perspectives, the motivations behind European colonial endeavors take on a different dimension. Examining the actions through the lens of those historically marginalized reveals a complex interplay of power dynamics, challenging the simplistic narrative of competition and emphasizing the exploitation, subjugation, and lasting consequences on colonized societies. The Eurocentric viewpoint tends to overshadow the agency and resistance of indigenous populations, offering a limited understanding of the multifaceted forces at play during the colonial era (Ibid.)

Upon the arrival of Europeans in the Americas, intricate network of global hierarchies unfolded, influencing diverse features of society. To optimize this complex scenario, various related systems emerged simultaneously. Within the context of this work, it is pertinent to emphasize certain key dimensions of these systems. Accordingly, these interconnected hierarchies played a pivotal role in shaping the power dynamics and societal structures during this historical period (Grosfoguel, 2007):

- Global Class Formation;(Grosfoguel, 2007)
- International Division of Labor (capital used forceful and authoritarian approaches to organize labor in the periphery);(I. Wallerstein, 2011)

- Global Racial/Ethnic Hierarchy (a hierarchy favoring European people over non-European);(I. Wallerstein, 1989)

- Epistemic Hierarchy (Western knowledge was privileged over non-Western counterparts);(QUIJANO & Wallerstein,1992)

- Linguistic Hierarchy (European languages were prioritized over non-European languages); (Grosfoguel, 2007)

The enduring impact of structures established over the course of 450 years remains a critical aspect of the contemporary global landscape, persisting even in the wake of the juridical-political decolonization of the past five decades. What is observable today is the manifestation of an entrenched 'colonial power matrix,' evolving from the historical epoch of 'global colonialism' to the current era characterized by “global coloniality”. Despite the formal dissolution of “colonial administrations” and the establishment of independent political entities in the periphery, a discernible continuity exists in the stark exploitation and dominance experienced by non-European populations, particularly in the face of European and Euro-American influence. Even though, the intricate web of historical hierarchies, with Europeans positioned superior to non-Europeans, endures in a complex interplay with the “international division of labor” and the implacable accumulation of global capital. This persistent structure underscores the deeply ingrained and systemic nature of the power imbalances that have transcended the era of formal colonial rule (Grosfoguel, 2007).

The notion of a "decolonization of the world" perpetuates a misleading belief that severs the connection between the colonial legacy and present-day global hierarchies. This contributes to neglecting the presence of "coloniality" in a current world. In fact, over the last fifty years, formally independent countries have, following dominant Eurocentric discourses (I. M. Wallerstein, 2001), has resulted in the construction of narratives surrounding national identity, development, and sovereignty. This narrative construction fosters an illusion of autonomy and progress, masking the continued influence of global power dynamics. In reality, the economic and political systems of these ostensibly independent countries remain deeply influenced by their subordinate positions within the overarching global capitalist framework (I. Wallerstein, 1989).

Aníbal Quijano's concept of the "coloniality of power" (Quijano, 2000) underscores that a colonial world still persists, challenging the incomplete realization of

decolonization dreams from the twentieth century. To truly advance beyond narrow perspectives on colonial relations, there is an imperative need to recognize and address the enduring impacts of coloniality in our contemporary socio-political landscape.

2.2 Historical concept of colonialism and imperialism

Centuries ago, the world experienced a dominance structure called colonialism. Over time, this system has transformed, with shifts in power sources, changes in exploitation, and developments in organization and control. In the present context, the concept of cultural imperialism aptly describes the mechanisms through which societies consolidated into the modern global system. (Schiller, 1975) Consequently, this underscores the intricate processes by which the dominant segments of societies are not only influenced but at times coerced or incentivized to synchronize their social institutions with the values and structures championed by the central dominating force. Cultural imperialism encapsulates the subtle yet pervasive ways in which the prevailing global power exerts its influence on the cultural fabric of societies, shaping not only their institutions but also influencing public discourse and norms. It illuminates the power dynamics at play, revealing how certain cultural values and structures are gently imposed or approved, often leading to a homogenization that aligns with the ideologies of the dominant global force. Recognizing and critically engaging with the dynamics of cultural imperialism becomes essential to preserving the diversity and autonomy of societies in the face of the pressures exerted by the modern world system. In the same way, the present pursuit is towards global cultural and ideological uniformity, not led by a single nation but by an integrated system involving various national sectors (Dagnino, 2019; 9-17)

In today's cultural and communication policies, the main challenge, though not always acknowledged, is the fight against domination. Namely, this can be external, where power comes from outside the country, or internal, with a ruling group within the nation. This struggle is present internationally, nationally, and even on an individual level, often hidden but involving those resisting domination. Nonetheless, all key communication issues today are connected to this central and growing confrontation. Leaders from non-aligned countries point out that imperialism goes beyond politics and economics, affecting social and cultural aspects. It imposes foreign ideologies on developing nations. As a result, these leaders stress the need to uphold national cultural

identity, eliminate colonial-era damage, and protect their own cultures and traditions. (Girling, 2010)

The long-lasting cultural impacts of imperialism are a big concern for communication and culture in former colonies. Furthermore, its not just about the past-current forms of domination still exist in new and familiar ways, for nations that were colonies recently, creating communication and cultural policies for national liberation is crucial. It's also important for improving the living conditions of working people. Notably, political changes that don't make life better for the majority aren't true liberation-genuine liberation means recognizing and meeting the essential needs of local people. (Schiller, 1975)

It's crucial to recognize the influential and collaborative role played by the ruling groups in regions dominated by the world capitalist economy. Despite the seemingly one-sided cultural penetration, the active and initiating efforts from the system's core, particularly from the United States, should not be considered as secondary factors in the process. Ultimately, it is the global market imperatives of multinational corporations controlled by the U.S. and West Europe that drive and organize the world system. The imagery and cultural perspectives of this ruling sector at the core play a pivotal role in shaping and structuring consciousness across the entire system (Ibid).

In summary, as technology in mass media advances quickly, society must combat the spread of imperialist ideas affecting public discourse. This requires creating "ideological antibodies" to counter their harmful impact. The best approach is active engagement and resistance, not just avoiding them. For this reason, it's crucial to regularly start public discussions and evaluations, empowering people to critically assess and respond to bourgeois ideology. (Schiller, 1975)

Dal Yong Jin delves into the dynamics of imperialism which has endured meaningful evolution in parallel with the development of uneven power dynamics in the 21st century, notably involving the United States, Europe, and non-Western countries. (Jin, 2017)

By referring to Lenin's economic work, "Imperialism, the Highest State of Capitalism" (Lenin, 1917) Dal Yong Jin highlights that this monumental book serves as a valuable starting point for discussing imperialism, given its lasting impact on our current era. While recognizing that the conditions have significantly changed in terms of society,

economy, and technology over the past century, it is worthwhile to explore whether Lenin's ideas can still be relevant in the 21st century (Jin, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to look at the historical context of imperialism, exploring its evolution from Lenin's time through cultural imperialism, information imperialism, and now to platform (or media) imperialism. In fact, examining the development of these different forms helps us evaluate whether a new concept of imperialism is evolving, with a focus on main characteristics such as the rapid rise and global dominance of U.S.-based on a variety of methods of transmitting and reproducing information. (Jin, 2017)

It's crucial to distinguish that Lenin's notion of monopoly capitalism doesn't exclusively imply a singular colossal company monopolizing an entire market. To fully grasp this concept, it is imperative to delve into the definition of imperialism. Lenin's characterization of imperialism goes beyond the narrow understanding of individual market monopolies; instead, it encapsulates a broader economic and geopolitical phenomenon. In this context, imperialism is manifested through the consolidation of financial and industrial interests, often transcending national boundaries, and the subsequent exertion of influence and control over weaker nations. Lenin's exploration of imperialism reflects a nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics within capitalist systems, shedding light on the complexities introduced by the ascendancy of monopolistic forces and their extensive implications on both economic and geopolitical landscapes, that's why it is initial to take a look at definition of imperialism: *“capitalism at that stage of development at which the domination of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the division of all the territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed”* (Lenin, 1917).

Lenin provided a clear explanation of capitalist imperialism, emphasizing the role of finance capital. Two key points stand out:

- The establishment of worldwide capitalist monopolies that split the world among themselves.;
- The global territorial division of the world among the main capitalist powers (Lenin, 1917) ;

For instance, The United States, historically imposed a control over non-Western nations through military force, capital, and cultural exports, currently asserts global dominance through the widespread adoption of platforms. This extensive usage of platforms has greatly benefited the U.S. on a large scale. Certainly, it serves as a persistent employment of imperial power by the U.S., extending beyond capital to encompass technology, culture, and ideologies, thereby maintaining control over a significant portion of the world. Steinmetz (Bailin & Steinmetz, 2005) reasoned an idea that the contemporary manifestation of imperialism diverges from colonialism in that it is no longer territorially driven. Instead of directly controlling territories, a few Western nations, including the U.S., now dominate global markets using advanced technologies and cultural influence in the 21st century. Although traditional territorial occupation may not be evident today, non-territorial dominance persists, especially with the U.S. expanding its influence through various means, like the widespread adoption of platform technologies and culture. (Dal Yong, 2017)

Likewise, H. Schiller (Schiller, 1975) pointed out that the control of media distribution by the United States and select European countries is a key aspect of Western imperialism. He termed this phenomenon cultural imperialism, describing it as the processes through which societies align with the values of the dominant center of the global system.

In the same way, Boyd-Barrett (Boyd-Barrett & Mirrlees, 2019) noted the growth of media agencies like Reuters and Wolff in imperial capitals during the 19th and early 20th centuries, tied to colonialism. These agencies served as propaganda tools in Lenin's era. Winseck and Pike (Winseck & Pike, 2007) highlighted the global expansion of cable and wireless companies from 1860 to 1930, illustrating the link between communication, globalization, and capitalist imperialism during Lenin's time. Moreover, the worldwide growth of fast communication and transportation networks- simplified the flow of capital, technology, people, news, and ideas, bringing markets, merchants, and bankers closer together (Winseck & Pike, 2007; 37).

Indeed, technological progress has significantly contributed to the development and maintenance of hidden imperialism. The emergence of various social platforms has given boost to an increase in the imbalance of power distribution. In fact, “platform imperialism” extends beyond material aspects to encompass ideological issues. Platform

developers assert symbolic hegemony over the majority of developing countries that purchase and utilize their platforms. Consequently, these nations contribute their labor, ultimately benefiting both the inventors and the countries that own the platforms. In contrast to the historical form of Western cultural imperialism, which influenced other nations to adopt consumerism and democracy, the contemporary manifestation involves a more profound symbolic hegemony. This is primarily due to the pivotal role that platform technologies play in the daily lives of individuals (Dal Yong, 2017).

It is worth noting that, Lenin highlighted how nation-states and transnational corporations interact within the concept of great powers. Therefore, it's crucial to see platform imperialism as an outcome of the state-industry complex. This implies that platform imperialism goes beyond technological gaps to include disparities in intellectual property, symbolic dominance, and user commodities. These concerns concentrate capital in the hands of a small group of platform owners based in the U.S., leading to the widening global divide (Lenin, 1917).

Technological advancements have unmistakably and distinctly shaped the evolution of mass communication media. Whether new forms of transmission emerge overtly or subtly, a discernible "hidden imprint" persists, or conversely, one can trace the evident influence of the Western world. The contemporary development of digital platforms unfolds through a dynamic characterized by imbalances in technology and capital exchanges, illustrating a discernible technological hegemony led by U.S.-based companies that wields considerable influence across numerous nations. In contrast to sectors such as culture and hardware, where maintaining unequal power dynamics typically involves the exportation of goods and services, the landscape of platform imperialism operates under a distinct paradigm. Here, the dominance exerted by foreign entities is rooted in the incorporation of intellectual property and commercial values within digital platforms. This nuanced approach plays a pivotal role in capital accumulation and power expansion, transcending traditional notions of economic influence. The embedding of such values within the platforms not only solidifies the technological dominance of certain nations but also establishes a potent means of extending influence globally (Jin, 2017; 12).

2.3 Decolonization of the dominant narratives

In this work, the comprehensive exploration of the interwoven concepts of colonial theory, decolonial thought, imperialism studies, and their dialogue with the Dialectic of Enlightenment in Critical Theory. These foundational chapters serve as crucial frameworks to decipher historical trajectories, power dynamics, and cultural imprints, providing a nuanced understanding of the complex forces that have shaped the world.

Colonial theory unraveling the multifaceted narratives of domination, exploration, and exploitation deeply embedded in the historical fabric of nations. It extends beyond territorial conquests, encompassing the imposition of cultural hegemony, economic exploitation, and enduring impacts on indigenous populations. By scrutinizing the mechanisms through which colonial powers asserted control, it is possible to observe a profound insights into the lasting legacies that persist in contemporary global dynamics. Building upon colonial theory, decolonial thought represents a paradigm shift. It challenges normative frameworks, seeking to dismantle entrenched hierarchies and reclaim narratives. Decolonial perspectives invites to reevaluate history, question established knowledge structures, and amplify marginalized voices. Envisioning alternative futures liberated from the shackles of colonialism, decolonial thought prompts a reimagining of identity, knowledge production, and societal structures.

Expanding analytical scope to the global stage, imperialism studies delve into the interconnectedness of geopolitical power dynamics. Imperialism encompasses economic and cultural dimensions, exerting influence beyond territorial borders. By scrutinizing the economic, political, and cultural ramifications of imperialist endeavors, by uncovering the ways in which dominant powers perpetuate influence on a global scale. Imperialism, as a concept, transcends geographical boundaries, and its echoes persist in contemporary international relations.

As these theories come together, a intricate interweaving unfolds, disclosing the intricate dynamics inherent in the power., resistance, and resilience that has shaped the course of human history. It is within these interstices that find “fertile ground” for critical inquiry, enabling a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in the human experience.

It is crucial to provide an illustrative example that elucidates the concept of historical trajectories intertwining and acknowledges the inherent limitation preventing an indefinite revision into the past: “...*There are no waiting rooms in history, but rather rooms that have remained closed and can be re-opened. These rooms are the countless attempts at liberation tried repeatedly by the oppressed but which were always interrupted by the violence of the ruling classes...*” (Tomba, 2019; 15) The author metaphorically describes history as lacking waiting rooms, emphasizing active engagement over passivity. Closed rooms symbolize missed opportunities for change and liberation, deliberately thwarted. "Countless attempts at liberation" denote ongoing efforts by oppressed groups, consistently disrupted by violent actions from ruling classes. This violence represents oppressive measures to maintain control. The dynamic nature of history is portrayed as a succession of closed-off opportunities, highlighting the persistent struggle for liberation against formidable obstacles.

Critical theory, as an intellectual framework, invites to question the status quo, unmask ideologies, and envision pathways toward a more just and equitable society. The synthesis of colonial, decolonial, and imperialist theories with the insights of the Dialectic of Enlightenment enriches an understanding of the complexities inherent in the human experience.

The transition from colonialism to critical theory is a dialectical process—one that demands ongoing reflection, critique, and a commitment to dismantling oppressive structures in pursuit of a more equitable future. These intersections, the convergence of theories becomes a compass guiding toward a more profound comprehension of the intricate tapestry of human history and the possibilities for transformative change.

The forthcoming chapter shall meticulously delve into the strategic application of critical theory's sophisticated frameworks, elucidating how they may be strategically employed to interrogate and reshape prevailing historical narratives. This scholarly exploration seeks to contribute to a broader academic discourse on the nuanced intersections of history, power, and knowledge, ultimately aspiring to cultivate a more sophisticated, inclusive, and erudite understanding of the shared human experience.

2.4 Dialectic of enlightenment

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer are among the founders and main representatives of the Frankfurt School. "The Dialectic of the Enlightenment" (T. W. Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997) was published in 1947, but was reissued in 1969, as the authors decided to add fundamental points to it that would help the reader to study and analyze new historical events in the most profound way, which, undoubtedly, influenced the idea of culture and the Enlightenment in general.

It is worthwhile to examine the "Enlightenment Project" in the context of the decolonization approach. The book "Globalization and the Decolonial Option" (Mignolo & Escobar, 2013) states that the Frankfurt school is thought of as one of the critical theories, but should not be perceived as the only possible one. Theodor Adorno and Horkheimer denounced the way mass culture shapes public opinion and imposes its postulates. Why it is possible to observe a connection with the decolonization approach?

The decolonial school of thought criticizes and challenges the established concepts of Europe and North America, thus not limiting the process of cognition to just one paradigm. Such a "liberating" trend in both directions makes it possible to rethink the concept of "knowledge" and what forms it. (Mignolo & Escobar, 2013) Thus, in the "Dialectic of Enlightenment", the aspect of forming the opinion of the population through the promotion of one point of view is touched upon. Consequently, the media becomes a tool for imposing certain standards, so it is essential to be aware of and resist this.

Presently, it is noteworthy that American culture holds a dominant influence over others. Consumers embedded in this cultural context miss out on the opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts. This cultural context blurs the line between thoughts perceived as "personal" and those perceived as "imposed." So, the imposition of certain standards of thinking affects a person's awareness of his belonging to society. The expansion of the boundaries of consciousness can contribute to the extension of abstract thinking, this approach can be a way out of the subjugation of consciousness. (T. W. Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997)

In today's world, there are various means through which people can share information. As the dynamics of society undergo transformative shifts, corresponding changes manifest in the nature of culture, making it crucial to delve into historical predecessors for a comprehensive understanding of present-day cultural phenomena. The

book by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer was written in the 1940s during a time of big industry and mass culture. Essentially, it remains applicable to today's culture, even in the context of a current post-industrial era. The patterns authors talked about in their book are still happening. The strategies employed by ruling classes to exert influence on mass culture are evident, although accompanied by noticeable deviations from historical paradigms as new realities progressively distance ourselves from certain erstwhile norms.

What is the dialectic of Enlightenment? Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer state that the European Enlightenment wanted power not only over people, but also over nature. The well-known principle of "knowledge - power" is the fundamental thesis of the Enlightenment itself, but this knowledge, according to the author, did not give a person anything and did not particularly improve his situation, and perhaps only worsened and the example with the equipment. A person was able to realize what place he occupies in this world, was able to explore and understand nature, but the more a person learned this, the more he realized his helplessness and his dependence on external factors. Adorno calls it "knowing your place" - it means that a person has to accept that he cannot have sovereignty, he can only be part of some sovereignty. To be Enlightened is not to be in the center of the world, but to be in some part of it, to be an insignificant part that, in fact, can do nothing, and must obey everything that is told to it. It is in these signs, which I described earlier, that the dialectic of the Enlightenment manifests itself.

In the existing cultural context, a significant concept comes into play known as the principle of equivalence. This concept suggests that diverse things can be compared by simplifying them into measurable values. Explored in the "Dialectic of Enlightenment," this idea serves as a central theme, contributing to our understanding of how things operate in our society. Essentially, the key point here is that in a society influenced by the bourgeoisie, there's a strong focus on comparing and standardizing different elements. This involves simplifying complex qualities into measurable standards, which then shapes how society views and values various things within its structure. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997; 4)

The presence of power within a social structure essentially brings about a sense of unity and strength to the collective whole it governs. This power's expression, often expressed through the division of labor, plays a fundamental role in ensuring the self-preservation of the dominated society. However, this very division of labor can have

unforeseen consequences, as it tends to transform the entire collective, in its entirety, and the operation of its inherent rationality into a means to further specific interests. The intricate interplay between power, the collective, and the resulting intellectual constructs profoundly impacts the formation of public opinions. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997; 16)

Regarding the influence of the government on public opinion, this narrative emphasizes the role of external forces in guiding and standardizing the views and behavior of the masses. It highlights the tendency to maintain a conformist and homogenous societal structure, where individuals are expected to adjust with prescribed norms and values. The parallel between the "threatening collective" and the deceptive surface suggests to how these societal pressures can serve the interests of those in power, who manipulate these dynamics to reinforce their authority and control over public sentiment and action (Ibid.; 21).

Within the contemporary framework, culture exerts an unparalleled influence that tends to homogenize various aspects of our lives. Notably, the realms of film, radio, and magazines have coalesced into a system that carries a profound impact. Within this cultural system, a striking uniformity characterizes each distinct branch, creating a remarkable consensus among them (Ibid.; 94).

Necessarily, reflections about the culture has always been at odds with the very nature of culture. The broad concept of "culture" inherently involves processes of identification, categorization, and classification that assimilate culture into the realm of administration. Only what has undergone industrialization and strict standardization fully fits this concept of culture. By subjecting all aspects of intellectual production equally to the unique goal of imprinting the work routine onto the senses of individuals, from the moment they leave the workplace in the evening to when they return in the morning, this culture cynically fulfills the notion of a unified culture that philosophers of individuality once promoted against the backdrop of mass culture. (Ibid.; 104)

The analysis provided by de Tocqueville a century ago has undeniably materialized over the years. In a culture dominated by private monopolies, tyranny no longer operates by commanding: "*Think as I do, or face death.*" (De Tocqueville, 2015; 151) Instead, it adopts an innovative approach, stating: "*You are free not to think as I do; your life, your property-all that you shall keep. But from this day on you will be a stranger among us.*" (De Tocqueville, 2015)

Nonconformists are subjected to economic impotence, which extends to intellectual powerlessness as they become isolated loners. Detached from the mainstream, they are often deemed inadequate. While the system of supply and demand is disintegrating in material production, it functions as a mechanism of control in the superstructure, serving the interests of the ruling class. The consumers affected by this system encompass workers, salaried employees, farmers, and small business owners (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997; 105-106)

It merits particular attention to observe a dynamic in which works of art, carefully wrapped in packaging evocative of political slogans, are aggressively promoted to an audience that may initially resist their charm. The culture industry plays a crucial role in this process, offering these cultural products at reduced prices, related to enticing the public with a budget-friendly attraction.

This scenario underscores the manipulation and strategic maneuvering within mass media, where art and culture are not merely presented for appreciation but rather cleverly marketed and pushed onto the public. The tactics employed in this process are similar to opening up a public park for communal enjoyment, making the art readily accessible to a broad audience. This highlights the complex relationship between the culture industry and mass media, emphasizing how artistic expressions and cultural elements are influenced, packaged, and delivered to the public in ways that may challenge the audience's initial resistance (Ibid.; 130).

The humanity, with the help of enlightenment, intended to eliminate myths, make knowledge clear and accessible, but as a result, it created new myths. By trying to simplify the universal norms and foundations, this has only led to a decrease in the importance of mind, because it becomes only a tool. Mind and science have separated from humanity.

The concept of the 'Enlightenment Project' emerges as inherently ambiguous, defying definitive characterization. It is unequivocally challenging to assert the completion of the 'Enlightenment Project,' given its formidable potential that remains elusive for exhaustive realization. Moreover, the perpetual evolution of culture, particularly within the realm of mass culture, further complicates any conclusive declarations about the attainability of the "Enlightenment Project." (T. W. Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997)

2.4.1 Adorno's theory of the culture industry

Mass culture is short-lived. What is the underlying rationale for this phenomenon? In the unending evolution of preferences, standards, and tastes, this iterative process consistently functions as a dynamic and living organism. Mass culture is becoming a phenomenon that can never be called complete, just like the enlightenment process. (T. W. Adorno, 2001)

The term "mass media," expertly crafted to suit the agenda of the culture industry, already directs our focus toward a relatively benign territory. This terminology subtly shifts our attention away from the potential manipulative undercurrents that exist within the realm of mass media. It's a linguistic choice that serves to downplay the more intricate facets of mass media's influence and control over public perception and discourse. (Ibid.; 91)

Max Weber's focus remained primarily on administration in a rather narrow context, mainly addressing bureaucratic hierarchies. (Weber, 2009) In accordance with the observations along with Robert Michels, recognized similar tendencies emerging in political parties and, notably, in the realm of education and instruction. However, over time, these trends have advanced far beyond their initial manifestations, extending their influence more comprehensively. This transformation is not exclusive to economic monopolies.

The expansion of administrative structures in both scale and scope has ushered in a significant paradigm shift. Mechanisms that once followed a more liberalistic model are no longer operating in conjunction with administration but have, instead, asserted a dominant position, even encroaching on areas traditionally seen as zones of individual freedom. In this contemporary landscape, these domains of freedom often appear to exist merely by the concession of the overarching administrative mechanisms. (Weber, 2009)

Eventually, this shift in power dynamics was foreseen during the pre-fascist time by Karl Mannheim. (Mannheim, 2014) It reflects a changing socio-political landscape where administrative control and influence have gained unprecedented prominence, impacting various spheres of society, including the economy, politics, and education. Simultaneously, transformation underscores the complex interplay between administrative power and individual freedoms, offering insights into the evolving dynamics of governance and societal control. (Adorno, 2001; 111)

Defining the culture as the process of elevating humanity beyond the state of raw nature, without resorting to oppressive means, it becomes evident that culture, in this sense, has not entirely succeeded. It has struggled to take firm root in human society, especially in situations where essential prerequisites for a life marked by human dignity have been lacking.

The persistence of barbarous outbreaks among human beings, driven by deep-seated grievances about their circumstances and the absence of true freedom, underscores this point. Paradoxically, the warm embrace of the offerings of the culture industry, even when people are partially aware that it may lack substance, reveals a complex facet of the same phenomenon. This conspicuous harmlessness might be superficial, masking a more profound underlying issue.

Over time, culture has evolved into a self-contradiction, symbolizing the consolidation of educational privilege. Consequently, it has found its place within the broader material production process as an administrated supplement to it. This process parallels how mass media sometimes manipulates and reshapes cultural content to serve its purposes, often diluting the authenticity and richness of culture in the process. (Adorno, 2001; 126)

In the world of culture, true pure immediacy is a rarity. When culture allows itself to be consumed arbitrarily, as if it were just another commodity, it inevitably exerts a degree of influence and manipulation over individuals. Becoming a subject of culture requires a degree of objective discipline and mediation, particularly in our highly administrated contemporary society. It is often the experts who advocate for this mediated consumption of culture.

In this structured world, the authority of these experts can be rooted in the intrinsic value of the cultural object itself, rather than relying solely on the power of suggestion or personal prestige. Yet, discerning which experts truly possess this authoritative foundation can be a complex task. It's almost a circular conundrum – you would need an expert to identify the true experts. This raises questions about the legitimacy of expertise and the intricate web of influence that underpins the consumption and interpretation of culture in our society. (Adorno, 2001; 129)

Within the current framework of liberal-democratic governance, individuals still retain a notable degree of freedom within institutional structures. Through active and

critical engagement with these institutions, individuals have the capacity to make modest contributions towards correcting the system. By conscientiously utilizing the mechanisms of administration, they can potentially transcend mere administered culture.

The slight deviations from the pervasive norm available to these individuals help define, albeit in a somewhat limited manner, the distinction pertaining to the overarching societal whole. Although the prospects for effecting substantial change may seem bleak, it is precisely within these divergences, within the differences themselves, that hope finds its focus. In these variations from the status quo, the potential for transformation and progress emerges, offering a glimmer of optimism within the complex tapestry of contemporary governance and culture. (T. W. Adorno, 2001)

2.4.2 Habermas' theory of public sphere

Jürgen Habermas in «The Interweaving of Myth and Enlightenment: Horkheimer and Adorno» (Habermas & Levin, 1982) believes that the work of Adorno and Horkheimer is a "strange book", which can be called the emptiest and their ideas are very outdated and do not fit into the new realities. According to Habermas, the "Enlightenment project" is incomplete, because the mind, to the end, can't yet think critically, but only in some aspects, so this problem is a problem of our time. The project of modernity was formed in the very philosophy of the Enlightenment itself. The author believes that the concept of modernity should be "counter-enlightenment", because all postmodern and modernist projects can't rely on the Enlightenment.

In essence, Habermas's critical examination of Adorno and Horkheimer's work converges with his broader theory of communicative action, forming a coherent narrative that underscores the evolving challenges and potential pathways in contemporary thought. (Habermas & Levin, 1982)

Jürgen Habermas described four distinct types of individual actions in his fundamental work "Theory of Communicative Action":

1. teleological action, with strategic action as a subset;
2. normatively regulated action;
3. dramaturgical action;
4. communicative action. (Habermas, 1985; 85-86)

It is essential to take a look at communicative action theory due to the fact of critical examination of situations where two or more individuals engage in dialogue to understand and plan collaboratively. The central tenet is the endeavor to reach consensus on coordinating their actions, with the crux lying in the concept of interpretation, fostering discussion and agreement on the meaning of a given situation.

In "Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action," (Habermas, 1990) Habermas further elaborates on this concept, articulating the concept of communicative action in the following manner:

"...Communicative action can be understood as a circular process in which the actor is two things in one: an initiator, who masters situations through actions for which he is accountable, and a product of the transitions surrounding him, of groups whose cohesion is based on solidarity to which he belongs, and of processes of socialisation in which he is reared..."(Habermas, 1990)

This conceptualization finds resonance into the dynamic evolution of the public sphere, particularly during the latter half of the 19th century within capitalist societies. During this period, the implementation of representative democracy faced insurmountable challenges due to the overwhelming dominance of a robust and expansive state in the public sphere. (Habermas, 1991)

Habermas' scholar exploration focuses on the genesis, ephemeral prosperity, and eventual decline of the public sphere, which he conceptualizes as a realm characterized by rational-critical discourse and deliberation. A central tenet of Habermas' inquiry is the profound significance he attributes to the prospect of establishing an authentic public sphere that is inclusive of all individuals desiring participation. Employing a methodology comparable to Michel Foucault's analysis in "Discipline and Punish" (Foucault, 1975) Habermas scrutinizes the erasure of overt displays of power in public spaces and the gradual integration of power structures into individuals' lives from the 17th to the 20th centuries.(Habermas, 1991)

Habermas undertakes a comprehensive analysis of historical, economic, and political conditions spanning from antiquity to his contemporary era. This investigation traces the emergence of the public sphere, its operational dynamics, and its eventual dissolution over time. The core point of this phenomenon is the "public sphere" itself—an intermediary space between private individuals and public authorities. It serves as a

crucible for rational and critical discourse on public issues, offering a platform for individuals to convene, engage in meaningful debate, and act as a counterbalance to political power. The public sphere, as envisioned by Habermas, is designed to facilitate discussions on politics, enable critiques of governmental decisions, and foster an environment where individuals can inform one another about unfolding events.

The tragedy of the bourgeois public sphere lies in the eventual decline and destruction brought about by the very social forces that initially gave rise to it. The established discourse in salons and homes gradually gave way to a more organized form of communication driven by large commercial entities. This shift can be traced most effectively through the evolution of the newspaper industry, which originally functioned as a small handicraft business but later became preoccupied with competing perspectives and perceptions.(Habermas, 1991)

During this transformation, literary journalism emerged as a distinctive period. The original commercial purposes of news production faded into the background as the press became entangled in what Habermas termed the "hobbyhorses of the aristocracy" (Habermas, 1991). However, with the advent of monopoly capitalism, the end of this era, dated by Habermas to the early 1870s, marked the commercialization of the press. Literary forms of representation gave way to specialized journalists who operated under the sway of private interests tied to property ownership.

The pursuit of revealing political domination through rational discourse was replaced by the imposition of an ideological consensus, achieved through the mechanisms of economic and political manipulation.

3. Empirical and methodological research

The previous chapter delved into the core doctrine of Critical theory and imperialism, offering essential insights into interpreting historical trajectories, power dynamics, and cultural influences. By understanding these concepts, a nuanced comprehension of the complicated forces that have shaped the world is acquired. This chapter attempts to explore the historical context surrounding the evolution of the relationship between the "Global North" and the "Global South," as well as the manipulation of public opinion regarding this dynamic. Using the Iranian protests of 2022 as a case study, there is a prime opportunity to analyze these events through the lenses of

Critical theory. Critical theory, deeply rooted in the intellectual tradition of the Frankfurt School, serves as a valuable framework for examining power balances and dynamics.

By scrutinizing media representations through the lens of critical theory, we can observe how various actors challenge dominant discourses. Alternative media outlets provide platforms for dissenting voices to offer alternative perspectives on events, often questioning mainstream narratives and offering a more nuanced understanding of complex issues. Critical theory narratives continue to be relevant in the contemporary era, where media landscapes are constantly evolving. The modern age has further amplified the voices of alternative media sources and grassroots movements, providing new opportunities for challenging dominant discourses and fostering diverse narratives. This ongoing engagement reflects the dynamic nature of media representation and the persistent struggle for diverse perspectives.

In addition to critical theory, media imperialism emerges as a crucial concept, highlighting the widespread influence of Western media institutions and narratives in shaping global perceptions and agendas. This phenomenon becomes particularly relevant in the context of the Iranian protests, where the dominance of Western media could significantly impact how these events are portrayed and understood on the international stage. By scrutinizing the role of media imperialism alongside critical theory, a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities underlying the protests in Iran in 2022 can be developed. This prompts to examine power imbalances and challenge prevailing narratives, consequently fostering a more nuanced interpretation of global events.

Exploring colonization theories unveils how Western media representations of the Iranian protests might reinforce existing power imbalances and cultural hierarchies. Within this framework, the tendency to exoticize or sensationalize events in non-Western nations, such as Iran, has the potential to sustain narratives of "otherness" and uphold stereotypes that position Western societies as inherently superior or more advanced. Such portrayals can obscure the underlying causes of unrest in Iran, hindering a deeper understanding of the situation, and blocking genuine solidarity with those promoting for justice and dignity.

This section aims to delve deeply into the protests in Iran through the theoretical framework presented earlier, specifically focusing on the concept of "selectivity" in media representation. The notion of "selectivity" extends beyond simply the bias in

choosing which events to cover and how to frame them, encompassing a broader analysis of the historical forces that shape these choices. This approach is crucial for understanding how media narratives about the protests in Iran are constructed and disseminated, and how they may reflect underlying power dynamics and biases.

When considering the "selectivity" of media representation in relation to the protests in Iran, it is essential to examine not only what is shown but also what is omitted or distorted. This selectivity can perpetuate skewed narratives that fail to capture the full complexity of the situation on the ground, reinforcing preconceived notions and stereotypes. By critically analyzing the historical factors that inform media representations of events in Iran, uncovering the underlying influences that shape these portrayals and challenge the dominant narratives that may be perpetuating colonial biases.

By critically analyzing the "selectivity" of media representation in the coverage of the protests in Iran, it is possible to gain insight into the power dynamics at play and the ways in which these representations are constructed. This analysis allows us to question the choices made by media outlets in framing events, shedding light on the selective nature of coverage and the potential impact of historical legacies on shaping these narratives. Ultimately, by interrogating the "selectivity" of media representation for more nuanced, accurate, and inclusive portrayals that center the voices and experiences of those involved in the protests in Iran.

Upon conducting an analysis of news coverage on protests within European Union countries, it became evident that a significant portion of the news originated from American media sources. This observation suggests that the distinction between American and European media outlets may not be as decisive as initially perceived, as both regions share a common objective of disseminating information. Furthermore, it was noted that American media holdings exert considerable influence within Europe, surpassing that of European media holdings.

Recognizing the need for greater transparency in media ownership, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) has thrown its support behind a campaign led by Access Info Europe. This campaign seeks to promote transparent and easily accessible information regarding media ownership. Access Info Europe, a non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing access to information, has highlighted a concerning trend: only nine European countries provide the public with information about the actual

owners of broadcast media through reporting to media regulators or company registers. This deficiency arises from the lack of requirements in most countries to disclose beneficial or ultimate owners of media outlets to media regulators.

The initiative endorsed by the EFJ (*European Federation of Journalists*, 2024) and spearheaded by Access Info Europe underscores the importance of media ownership transparency in safeguarding democratic principles and promoting informed public discourse. By advocating for greater disclosure requirements and facilitating access to information about media ownership, the campaign aims to foster a more transparent and accountable media landscape in Europe. Such efforts are crucial for ensuring media pluralism, safeguarding journalistic independence, and enhancing public trust in the media.

For instance, Fox News Europe, on the other hand, is not a distinct entity like the BBC. Fox News is an American news channel owned by Fox Corporation, which is a subsidiary of News Corporation. While Fox News does have international distribution, including in Europe, it does not have a separate entity called "Fox News Europe." Instead, its content is typically distributed through international cable and satellite providers.

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Particularly, various media outlets from both Western and Eastern perspectives will be examined in this study. However, it is notable that American media often serve as the primary source of information and agenda-setting for global news. Consequently, while analyzing headlines and articles related to protests, it becomes apparent that there exists a discernible pattern in the sourcing of news data. Thus, it was considered necessary to use American media as an example of Western information agenda.

From a Western perspective, specific media outlets have been identified, encompassing both Iranian and Middle Eastern media. Iranian media outlets were selected to provide insights into the position from the state where the protests occurred, while Middle Eastern media were chosen to represent regional viewpoints.

Furthermore, this chapter aims to delve into the historical relationship between Iran and Western media, clarifying the evolution of their interactions over time. Additionally, it will explore the role of discursive practices in shaping cultural differences and perceptions within media representations. Through this analysis, the chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play in media coverage of protests, particularly within the Iranian context.

3.1 Examination of cultural and historical biases in the contexts of shaping media description

First of all, it is worth considering the dynamics of Iran's representation in media discourse. Within Western media, the portrayal of Iran frequently mirrors established stereotypes and ideological tendencies. However, this representation goes beyond a simple reflection of facts, instead, it emerges as a consequence of wider power struggles and dominant ideologies. The lens through which Iran is viewed in Western media is often tainted by preconceived notions and biases, shaping narratives in a way that aligns with dominant Western perspectives. This skewed portrayal not only influences public perceptions but also serves broader geopolitical agendas.

By employing critical theory frameworks and drawing on insights from imperialism studies, this study aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms driving the representation of Iran in Western media. It seeks to enlighten how these representations are constructed, distributed, and sustained, as well as their implications for broader socio-political dynamics.

In the realm of mass-mediated discourse, control primarily rests in the hands of what Van Dijk terms symbolic elites- professionals tasked with producing communication for the public domain. These individuals play a pivotal role in shaping the dominant discourse, a concept articulated by Van Dijk, which perpetuates existing power dynamics. Journalistic norms, such as the pursuit of objectivity, often manifest in the use of elite sources, thereby reinforcing imbalances between privileged and underprivileged voices. Additionally, organizational practices, including the allocation of beats and sources, contribute to institutional discrimination, as outlined by van Dijk and Richardson(Richardson, 2004). For instance, in the UK, research reveals a stark

underrepresentation of Muslims in the journalistic workforce compared to their proportion in the population.(Dijk, 2011)

Efforts to address this lack of diversity have been multifaceted. Individual and institutional initiatives aim to promote diversity, although the implementation and effectiveness of diversity training remain subjects of scrutiny. Moreover, diversity in media content varies across European countries and media types, with discrepancies observed in the tone, balance, and accuracy of coverage. Despite these efforts, however, diversity alone does not guarantee pluralism. Hafez highlights the phenomenon of "representation without participation," wherein multicultural representation within media organizations may not translate into genuine inclusion or influence over power structures.(Hafez, 2011)

Extensive research has scrutinized Western media's portrayal of Islam and Muslims, revealing a consistent pattern of negative stereotypes and Orientalist tropes. Muslims are often depicted as a monolithic group, portrayed through a lens of conflict, violence, and extremism. This portrayal positions Islam and Muslims as the antithesis of Western ideals, framing them as an "Other" to be feared and mistrusted. Particularly since the events of 9/11, there has been a notable shift in media discourse towards securitization, reducing Muslims to a single-dimensional threat rather than acknowledging their diversity and complexity. This transformation in media representation has been observed globally, although variations exist across different national contexts.(Hafez, 2000)

In Germany, for instance, studies have highlighted the prevalence of "othering" Islam within media narratives, with violence being a central theme. Research by Ceuppens confirms earlier findings, underscoring the tendency of German media to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Muslims. Anti-Muslim discourses in various media genres further illustrates this point, revealing how newspapers and other outlets construct a dichotomy of "good" versus "bad" Muslims. This was particularly evident in the coverage of the first German Islam Conference in 2006, where mainstream newspapers portrayed Muslims in a polarized manner, contributing to their marginalization and stigmatization in public discourse. (Ceuppens, 2016)

In analyzing French media coverage, De Cock and Du Pont note a significant focus on 'foreign Islam' in French broadsheets, attributing this attention to France's

principle of laïcité and its historical colonial connections to the 'Muslim world'. This emphasis on foreign Islam varies across Western European media outlets, as evidenced by a cross-country content analysis which suggests that national factors outweigh ideological differences between progressive and conservative newspapers. Similarly, Scalvini's study on European public debate regarding religious diversity reveals nation-specific patterns in news coverage. Scalvini's analysis, conducted after the minaret ban controversy, highlights distinct discourses in countries such as Britain, France, and Germany. Despite shared themes like nationalism, each country constructs its discourse through unique argumentative strategies, such as emphasizing 'identity' in Germany, 'loyalty' in Britain, and 'secularism'/'republicanism'/'values' in France. (Scalvini, 2016)

In examining Islam's portrayal in British media, Poole offers a comprehensive analysis spanning both before and after 9/11 periods. Identifying a prevailing "framework of interpretation" within British reporting, Poole highlights key themes associated with Islam and Muslims, notably 'terrorism', 'extremism', 'conflict/violence', and 'cultural values/differences', particularly concerning issues such as veiling and freedom of speech. This framework, according to Poole, shapes the selection of news stories, reinforcing preconceived notions about Muslims and their perceived significance to dominant societal groups. Moreover, Poole suggests that these reporting frameworks are influenced by the perspectives and interpretations of specific elite groups and nations. (Poole, 2000)

Placing the aforementioned polarizations within a broader framework of “self” and “other” dialectics, two studies examining competing discourses on Iran and Iranians. Fayyaz and Shirazi conducted a textual analysis of 509 articles published in prominent U.S. magazines between 1998 and 2009, revealing persistent existential assumptions in the media portrayal of Iranians. Despite temporal shifts, the authors found enduring representations grounded in centralized notions of Persian and Islamic civilization, often placed together with the perceived superiority of the West. Their analysis unveiled a dichotomy between the 'good' and 'bad' Iranian, encapsulating a clash of civilizations narrative within Iran itself, opposing the ruling religious elite and their fundamentalist allies against the internationalism of the Iranian people. (Fayyaz & Shirazi, 2013)

As an example, Khodadadi and O'Donnell conducted a discourse analysis of 108 news articles published in leading Sunday newspapers between 2007 and 2011, alongside 52 travel blogs and interviews with tourists, to explore divergent discourses on Iran within

British society. They observed a dominant discourse of "Iran-as-Polity", emphasizing nuclear issues, danger, terrorism, and hostility, prevalent in mainstream media narratives. However, they also identified a counter-discourse of "Iran-as-Society", constructed by tourists following their visits to Iran. This discourse portrayed modernity in aspects of Iranian society and highlighted the hospitality of its people. Similarly, 'Iran-as-Society' as a counter-discourse to the Clash of Civilizations thesis, focusing on the similarities and harmonies between Iranian and Dutch societies. These studies collectively underscore the complexity of media representations of Iran and Iranians, revealing competing narratives shaped by geopolitical dynamics, cultural biases, and individual perspectives. (Khodadadi & O'Donnell, 2017)

By framing the significance of studying Iranian media within the context of its political categorization reinforces the notion that the Western look determines the value and relevance of such analysis. Furthermore, the emphasis on Iran's political classification implies a reductionist view that overlooks the complexity of information landscapes. Thus, the simplification limits the scope of examination to political dimensions while neglecting other critical factors that shape media practices and narratives in Iran. (Ranji, 2021)

3.2 Analysis of the impact of media on perception of Iran and Iranian culture

The portrayal of Iran in Western media has sparked ongoing scrutiny and debate, as perceptions are heavily shaped by narratives found in prominent outlets like The New York Times and CBS. This chapter delves into the intricate nuances of how Iran is depicted in Western media discourse, with a specific focus on the coverage provided by NYT and CBS. Through a comparative analysis of these media sources, the aim is to uncover the underlying trends, biases, and narratives that influence Western perspectives on Iran. Ultimately, exploring how Iran is represented in Western media, particularly through outlets such as The New York Times and CBS, provides invaluable insights into the complex interplay of media narratives and public perceptions.

The 2022 anti-hijab movement in Iran gained momentum following the tragic death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman. Western media reported her death as resulting from torture while in the custody of the Iranian Moral Police for non-compliance with hijab regulations. Iran, however, denied these allegations,

attributing her demise to a sudden heart attack. Amini's family refuted the Iranian government's explanation, asserting her good health prior to her detention. The protests that erupted in her hometown during her funeral soon spread nationwide, garnering significant global attention. The scale of the protests, reminiscent of the 2009 Green Movement, drew widespread international coverage.

According to international media, the protests and subsequent security crackdown resulted in the deaths of 402 civilians and 328 security guards. Iranian sources, however, reported lower casualty figures, depicting the events as riots. Iran's Supreme Leader, addressing police, blamed the United States and Israel for provoking unrest to destabilize the regime. Western media coverage of the protests amplified sympathies in Western capitals, fueling perceptions of regime change in Iran.

Globally, women cut their hair as a gesture of opposition to the Iranian regime. The significance of these mass demonstrations lay not only in the acts themselves but also in the media coverage received, shaping perceptions worldwide. Western media, leveraging conventional and social platforms, disseminated powerful propaganda against the Iranian regime, contributing to the narrative of regime change. What began as a social issue swiftly transformed into a politically charged event, illustrating the weaponization of media in fifth-generation warfare tactics. (BBC, 2022)

The news of Mahsa Amini's death broke through the efforts of two Iranian journalists, Nilofar Hamedei and Elahe Mohammadi. Mohammadi, affiliated with the Sharaq Daily, shared a poignant image of Mahsa's funeral on her Twitter account, a move that led to her subsequent arrest, along with her colleagues, by Iranian authorities. This Twitter post served as a catalyst, propelling the news into the global media spotlight. However, the portrayal of Mahsa's death varied significantly between Iranian and international media outlets, particularly those in the West. Western media narratives tended to emphasize anti-regime sentiments, shifting the focus from a social issue to a political one. Headlines often carried undertones of advocating for regime change, shaping public opinion accordingly.

Instances of violence or attacks on security forces by protesters were downplayed or omitted entirely in international media coverage. Clips depicting protesters removing the turbans of religious clerics remained largely unreported in mainstream Western outlets. Instead, Western coverage predominantly highlighted the grievances and

struggles of the protesters, painting a picture of widespread discontent. Even incidents such as the false claim of 15,000 protesters being executed received traction in international media, leading figures like Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to inadvertently propagate misinformation before retracting it. (Smith, 2022)

Conversely, the pro-hijab movement in India received scant attention compared to the anti-hijab movement in Iran, which was portrayed with distinct political objectives. Symbolic acts such as cutting hair or removing the hijab were often misinterpreted as protests against Islam by international media, revealing underlying prejudices and Islamophobic tendencies. Iranian media, however, offered a different perspective, presenting both the official narrative and the demands of the protesters while covering incidents like the government's expressions of sympathy toward Mahsa's family, which went unnoticed by international outlets.

Local Iranian media provided detailed coverage, including the publication of the post-mortem report, which highlighted Mahsa's underlying health conditions and refuted claims of police brutality. The Iranian Supreme Leader and President expressed condolences publicly, and the Iranian Prime Minister personally reached out to Mahsa's family, gestures that were overlooked by international media. This disparity in coverage underscored the divergent narratives propagated by Iranian and Western media, shaping perceptions and understanding of the events surrounding Mahsa Amini's death and the subsequent protests. (Esfandiary, 2023)

Considering Western media, there is often a wait for moments or events in Iran that can be politically exploited and framed as decisive. Analysis from Spike reveals a significant surge in published content surrounding the death of Mahsa Amini, with 1,504 articles appearing in the United States within just one week. CNN alone contributed 15 articles to this coverage in a matter of days, highlighting the attention given to the incident.

A similar trend was observed in the UK, where 720 articles were published within a 9-day period. Notably, The Guardian's article titled "Iranian woman dies after being beaten by morality police over hijab law" attracted substantial viewership despite the circulation of a video contradicting claims of physical assault against Mahsa.

Western media's coverage of the events in Iran was inundated with disinformation, departing from their usual reliance on more sophisticated tactics. False narratives, such

as claims of the deaths of 50 women during protests and the mischaracterization of the protests' nature, were propagated to provoke unrest and serve certain agendas. This departure from standard practices reflects the heightened desire to stoke unrest in Iran.

Across the European Union, the volume of published articles on the Iranian issue was significant, with Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands all contributing to the discourse. Notably, the prevalence of articles discussing Iranian women's rights or featuring the term "Iranian woman/women" exceeded 8,000 within the United States and the European Union. (Halawi, 2022)

To begin with, The New York Times article, provoked considerable discussion among prominent Western media outlets regarding Iran's purported decision to dismantle its morality police force. Initially perceived as a response to ongoing protests triggered by the tragic death of Mahsa Amini in September, this announcement was later rejected, highlighting the danger posed by Western media prioritizing narratives over factual accuracy.

The origin of the misleading narrative can be traced back to the misinterpretation of statements made by Iran's attorney general, Mohammad Javad Montazeri, during a press conference. Montazeri's remarks, hinting at the abolition of the morality police, were taken out of context and misconstrued. Moreover, no official confirmation of the alleged abolition has been issued by any Iranian authority, raising doubts about the credibility of the initial report. Rather than scrutinizing the information and seeking verification from reliable sources, many Western media outlets selected for sensationalist headlines based on questionable information (Yee & Fassihi, 2022).

The continuance of negative stereotypes surrounding Muslim countries within media discourse, presents a complicated challenge. Fact-checking fails to address the principal issue, as the problem extends beyond mere inaccuracies to deeply ingrained biases and intentional falsifications. These narratives often employ a selective portrayal of events, perpetuating a twisted perspective on the cultures and societies of nations (Ceuppens, 2016). Consequently, rather than reflecting objective realities, media coverage frequently reinforces preconceived notions and prejudices, shaping public perceptions in a negative manner. In essence, the issue lies not solely in the accuracy of reporting, but in the deliberate construction of a narrative that maintains stereotypes and falsifies reality. Addressing this systemic problem requires a nuanced approach that

acknowledges the underlying biases and challenges the prevailing narrative through more balanced and perceptive coverage.

The dissemination of inaccurate information regarding the fate of detained Iranian protesters, particularly by influential figures like Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, has drawn sharp criticism from human rights experts. Trudeau's assertion of over 15,000 arrests linked to the protests has been debunked as false, with both official Iranian sources and external observers estimating the actual number of arrests at around 2,000. This glaring disparity in figures underscores the critical importance of accurate reporting, especially in situations where human rights violations are at the forefront.(McQuillan, 2022)

In fact, during the period of the protests sparked by the tragic death of Mahsa Amini, Iran has witnessed widespread demonstrations demanding greater freedoms and governmental reform. Misinformation, such as Trudeau's inaccurate claim, not only undermines the credibility of the protest movement but also risks escalating tensions and endangering the safety of those involved.

Human rights experts have expressed concerns that false assertions, like those made by Trudeau, could erode the legitimacy of the uprising against Iran's regime. Inaccurate information not only distorts the reality of the situation but also detracts from the genuine grievances fueling the protests. As the protests persist and the crackdown intensifies, it is essential for the international community to exercise caution in disseminating information and prioritize accuracy and transparency in reporting on human rights abuses. Only through a steadfast commitment to truth and accountability can meaningful strides be made towards addressing the systemic injustices endured by the Iranian people.

Moreover, the response from Western leaders like Trudeau highlights a selective concern for human rights that often accompanies imperialist agendas. While attention is drawn to instances of violence and repression in countries like Iran, similar abuses committed by allies or within Western nations often go unaddressed. This double standard not only serves to perpetuate stereotypes about non-Western societies but also reinforces a narrative of Western superiority and moral authority, further entrenching imperialist power dynamics on the global stage. In essence, Trudeau's misrepresentation of the

situation in Iran serves as a stark reminder of the enduring legacy of imperialism in shaping international discourse and perpetuating systemic injustices.(McQuillan, 2022)

During the coverage of the protest events in Iran, attention was focused on the influence of religion in the country. Thus, the emphasis was placed on the fact that women's rights in the country are very limited. Western media show the country as closed from any innovations and alien to the pressure of the "civilized" world.

The portrayal of Iran in Western media often neglects to highlight the advancements and progress made within the country, particularly regarding the involvement of women in various spheres of society. Similarly, the media fails to acknowledge the increasing participation of women across different sectors and Iran's global advancements in certain industries and fields.

Instead of highlighting these positive developments, Western media often focuses on sensationalized events, such as the tragic death of Mahsa Amini, to create turmoil within Iran. By exaggerating or misrepresenting such incidents, picture of Iran as a society where women's contributions are marginalized or non-existent. However, this narrative could be countered with the presentation of credible statistics and evidence showcasing the significant role that women play in Iranian society and their contributions to its progress and development.

The difference in coverage between Iranian and Western media becomes apparent when examining the portrayal of women's roles in Iranian society. While Iranian media provides access to real statistics and data in the Persian language, Western outlets often obscure or overlook these narratives. Despite the existence of numerous websites dedicated to tracking global statistics, they tend to prioritize topics aligned with their interests and agendas, neglecting to cover issues that may challenge their perspectives. This exclusivity is increased by the limited accessibility of Iranian content to Western audiences, further sustaining the gap in understanding.(Halawi, 2022)

Documented data underscores the significant impact of women in various sectors of Iranian society. For instance, statistics reveal that a majority of students in Iran are women, with a notable presence in fields such as science, engineering, and medicine. Furthermore, women comprise a substantial portion of professionals, including doctors and authors, with a significant rise in the number of publishers since the Islamic revolution. These statistics and examples challenge the prevailing narrative of Iranian

women as marginalized or oppressed, painting a more nuanced picture of their multifaceted roles and achievements.

The portrayal of Iran in Western media often perpetuates stereotypes and biases that hinder the recognition of the country's achievements and complexities. Despite advancements in various spheres, these achievements often go unnoticed or are overshadowed by negative narratives that reinforce preconceived notions about the nation. Such narratives fail to capture the nuances of Iranian society and contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes that have developed over time.

Furthermore, media coverage often fails to acknowledge the diversity of experiences and freedoms within Muslim countries like Iran. While there are indeed limitations and challenges, it is inaccurate to portray Muslim-majority nations as uniformly oppressive or restrictive.

In essence, the portrayal of Iran in Western media underscores the importance of challenging stereotypes and biases to gain a more nuanced understanding of the country and its people. Recognizing the complexities of Iranian society, including its achievements, challenges, and diverse experiences, is essential for fostering mutual understanding and promoting accurate and respectful representations in the international arena.

In fact, since the protests began, global media has highlighted the bravery of demonstrators and the harsh repressions by the Iranian government. While this narrative has obtained widespread solidarity for the protesters, it also reflects a common theme of Western interventionism. Western nations, while expressing support for the oppressed, have been accused of contributing to their suffering through policies, sanctions, and military actions. In fact, since the protests began, global media has highlighted the bravery of demonstrators and the harsh repressions by the Iranian government.

CNN's Jake Tapper, for example, has advocated for tougher sanctions on Iran, citing concerns about the impact on women (Tapper, 2022). However, such calls raise doubts about the genuineness of Western support, particularly considering past interventions in Muslim-majority nations that have escalated hardships for women and other marginalized groups. The contradiction between advocating for women's rights abroad while limiting the rights of Muslim women and minorities domestically underscores the complexities and inconsistencies in Western approaches to governance and human rights.

Under this pressure from both the state and external forces, individuals find themselves caught in the crossfire of conflicting interests. These external appeals not only exacerbate the existing tension but also intensify the pressure on both the government and the citizens. The external scrutiny and interference create a sense of confinement, leading to heightened polarization and instability within the country. Caught between the demands of the state and the expectations of external actors, individuals are left struggling with the consequences of this external interference on their daily lives and well-being.

Moreover, media coverage has heavily focused on the issue of the hijab, particularly women's defiance of it, often depicting images and videos of women cutting their hair or burning their headscarves in protest. However, this narrative lacks of depth regarding the broader context of the protests, which go beyond only opposition to the hijab. The regime's reliance on Islamic legitimacy and its suppression of dissent carry deeper political implications that require exploration beyond superficial portrayals.

Focusing solely on the hijab narrows the narrative, diverting attention from the regime's broader control mechanisms over women and marginalized groups. By limiting the discourse to the hijab, there's a missed opportunity to delve into the overlapping forms of oppression experienced by the Iranian population. By framing the issue solely within the regime's religious enforcement context, the narrative accidentally sustains Islamophobia and reinforces harmful stereotypes, impacting Muslim communities beyond Iran.

Additionally, emphasizing the hijab sustains the false impression that such issues are confined to distant lands, reinforcing a simplistic view of Islam as the sole source of Iranian women's oppression. This oversimplification not only dismisses the multifaceted societal and political dynamics in Iran but also contributes to the stereotyping of Muslim communities globally. By framing the issue only within the regime's religious enforcement context, the narrative accidentally fuels Islamophobia and reinforces harmful stereotypes, impacting Muslim communities beyond Iran. (Jaber, 2022)

Fundamentally, what appears varying or unfamiliar within the beliefs of Western culture, often labeled as globalist, tends to receive coverage in the media through a lens of radicalism and repulsion. Iran's adherence to religious principles and the unwavering stance of the Global North towards nations diverging from their ideals and principles result in devaluation and disparagement in information outlets. This representation

underscores a pattern within cultural norms or beliefs outside the Western mainstream are portrayed as an abnormal or threatening, contributing to a narrative that reinforces existing power dynamics and hierarchies. The portrayal of such divergences in a negative light not only perpetuates stereotypes but also shapes public opinion and policy decisions, further marginalizing societies that do not conform to Western norms. This dynamic highlights a need for a more inclusive and nuanced approach to media representation that acknowledges the diversity of cultural perspectives and challenges simplistic dichotomies of "us versus them." Such an approach could foster greater understanding and empathy across cultures, covering the way for more just global discourse and engagement.

3.3 The influence of discursive practices the formation of cultural divergence

Within Western discourse, Iran is frequently portrayed through a lens that emphasizes its perceived differences from Western norms and values. This framing preserves stereotypes and reinforces notions of Iran as essentially incompatible with the West. Meanwhile, alternative voices and perspectives from Iran are silenced, further sustaining cultural divergence and misunderstanding. By privileging certain narratives over others, Western discourses limit the diversity of representations of Iran, blocking efforts towards mutual understanding and dialogue.

In contrast, within Iran, discursive practices are influenced by internal political dynamics, historical legacies, and cultural values. The Iranian government employs discursive strategies to assert national identity, resist Western influence, and legitimize its authority domestically and internationally. These discourses often emphasize themes of resistance, independence, and cultural pride, presenting Iran as a vibrant society with a rich heritage. However, the gap between internal and external discourses about Iran contributes to a sense of cultural dissonance and separation, both within Iran and in its interactions with the West.

One notable investigation conducted by Roushanzamir (2004) involved a critical textual analysis of U.S. media to uncover how it constructs a distinct portrayal of Iranian women for American audiences. Roushanzamir identified a binary representation wherein Iranian women are depicted either as passive victims of oppression. This portrayal transforms the Iranian woman into an object that symbolizes both knowledge and fantasy, thereby shaping the perception of Iran itself as a gendered entity. The

portrayal emphasizes Iran's "national character," characterized by elements like traditionalism, violence, terrorism, fanaticism, and oppression, all hidden behind the representation of the hijab. Roushanzamir concludes that this strategic portrayal of Iran, and by extension Islam, serves the interests of U.S. media corporations and aligns with Washington's foreign policy objectives.(Roushanzamir, 2004)

Bahia Halawi (Halawi, 2022) delves into the examination of discriminatory biases against Iran, revealing a nuanced complexity in the selective coverage of events by media outlets. This selective reporting not only exposes the glaring bias inherent in media agendas but also underscores the need for critical evaluation of information sources. Three distinct cases vividly illustrate this phenomenon:

1. Western media channels conspicuously allocated extensive coverage to the tragic case of Mahsa Amini, amplifying anti-Iranian narratives. However, they conveniently overlooked the widespread mass demonstrations in support of the Islamic Republic across Iran's provinces. This selective reporting underscores the biased agenda of these media outlets, prioritizing sensationalism over comprehensive coverage.
2. The case of Zainab Al-Khazali, killed by US forces in Iraq, received minimal coverage, with fewer than 100 articles addressing her death. Similarly, the bullying of Iranian football player Zahra Kaddi on social media garnered limited attention, with less than 1000 news articles globally. In both instances, media coverage tended to incite against Iran or accuse it of wrongdoing, neglecting the core issues at hand.
3. The ordeal of the Khamis Mushait orphans in Saudi Arabia, where girls faced abuse in an orphanage, was scarcely covered. Despite the severity of the situation, only a handful of news articles addressed the incident, indicating a clear reluctance to prioritize certain narratives over others. It was only after public pressure and scrutiny that media outlets reluctantly reported on the abuse, revealing their tendency to serve specific agendas.

These cases starkly highlight the disparity in media coverage and the imperative for audiences to diversify their information sources. They underscore the necessity of critically evaluating media motives and biases to attain a more comprehensive understanding of complex events and issues.(Halawi, 2022)

In analyzing Western media's portrayal of Iran, researchers have identified two distinct lines of empirical investigation. One line of inquiry examines Iran as a case study to understand broader representations of Islam and the Middle East in mainstream media, often categorizing Iran as the archetypical Islamic country. Another focuses specifically on Iran and Iran-specific topics, delving into the intricacies of its image in Western media. Extensive studies have scrutinized Western media's coverage of Islam and Muslims, revealing a consistent pattern of negative and stereotypical depictions. These representations often depict Islam as a monolithic religion and Muslims as a homogeneous outgroup, rife with Orientalist tropes and frequently associated with conflict, violence, and fanaticism. Consequently, Islam and Muslims are portrayed as the antithesis of Western ideals and values, serving as an "Other" to the Western self.

The construction of otherness serves as a significant factor in identity formation, acting as either a catalyst for positive self-perception or as a counterpoint to reinforce ingroup superiority. Othering not only continues discrimination against minority groups within a nation or prejudice against other nations but also maintains power asymmetries and justifies ingroup domination. This process can manifest verbally and through policy decisions, contributing to the effort of both hard and soft power dynamics. Power, in this context, operates not only in a political sense but also through the representation and production of knowledge and culture. While othering often involves portraying differences between self and other, it is not always hostile; it can also manifest through admiration and idealization of difference, although from a simplifying perspective. However, hierarchical views typically support othering processes, with the self positioned above the other, reinforcing community superiority and outgroup inferiority. Dominant societal views about the foreign other are preserved through mass media, often becoming unquestioned "common sense" characterizations that are instrumentalized by those in power to legitimize policies and actions, further establishing hegemonic meanings in the world.

4. Identity: Political and cultural in the context of Western influence

Building upon the previous discussion, the realm of Iranian politics and news coverage, it becomes apparent that understanding Iran's political and cultural identity is crucial, particularly in the context of Western pressure. Despite external influences, it is

essential to recognize the distinctiveness of Iran's identity and the preservation of its cultural landscape amidst such pressures. However, it is inevitable that Iranian identity and development remain intertwined to some extent with Western influence under such circumstances. Therefore, it is imperative to examine how internal dynamics and progress within the country either sustain or weaken its landscape and identities. It is noteworthy that the cultural dimension and development is intricately linked with political agendas and mechanisms for shaping cultural characteristics. Political forces wield significant influence over cultural aspects, especially within the contemporary global landscape. The media, as evidenced by the analysis of news publications, plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and choices, both within Iran and beyond its borders. In the era of globalization, which bears remains of colonial mechanisms, media narratives not only influence the self-perception of Iranians but also shape the perceptions of people outside Iran. As individuals exist the political landscape, their cultural background serves as a fundamental lens through which they perceive governance, formulate policy preferences, and engage with political institutions. This underscores the profound influence of cultural heritage, traditions, language, and religion on shaping one's political identity. Such socio-cultural factors intertwine with individuals' political affiliations, party preferences, and viewpoints on various political matters. This conceptual reframing illuminates the nuanced relationship between culture and politics, illustrating how individuals' cultural identities both inform and are influenced by their political identities. In turn, these twisted identities contribute to the formation of collective political identities within broader political communities

By intervening in fundamental aspects of self-knowledge and self-determination, media discourse serves as a platform for critical thinking and self-awareness. Thus, the analysis of individual events provides valuable insights into the discourse surrounding independence and self-determination. Through such analysis, it is possible to recognize the underlying characteristics of the chosen discourse and its implications for Iranian society and its interactions with the global community. Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to illuminate how a nuanced examination of specific events can shed light on broader themes of independence and self-determination within East's and Iran's socio-political landscape.

4.1 Analysis of power dynamics in shaping political and cultural identities

The realm of international relations extends far beyond mere policy formulation and decision-making processes. Rather, it exerts a profound influence on the lives of individuals across the globe, shaping the very fabric of our interconnected world. At its core, international relations encompass a diverse array of social, economic, and political interactions among nations, each interaction contributing to the intricate tapestry of global affairs. In today's world, the significance of international relations cannot be overstated, as it serves as the bedrock upon which the complexities of modern geopolitics unfold. From trade agreements to diplomatic negotiations, international relations serve as the conduits through which nations navigate their relationships and address shared challenges. Indeed, the dynamics of international relations are paramount in deciphering the intricate web of interactions and interconnections between nations. In an increasingly globalized world, where borders are porous and information flows freely, the importance of understanding these complex relationships cannot be understated. Whether it be economic partnerships that shape global trade patterns or diplomatic alliances that influence geopolitical landscapes, international relations play a pivotal role in shaping the course of history. Moreover, the field of international relations is dynamic and multifaceted, encompassing a myriad of social, economic, and political dimensions that intersect and interact in nuanced ways. International relations encompass a broad spectrum of interactions between nations, spanning from economic cooperation to political diplomacy (Reus-Smit, 2020). The interconnectedness of these interactions underscores the complexity of the field, highlighting the need for nuanced analysis and understanding. In essence, international relations serve as the cornerstone of global cooperation and governance, facilitating dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration on issues of mutual concern. By delving into the intricacies of international relations, we gain invaluable insights into the forces shaping our world and the ways in which nations navigate the complexities of an increasingly interconnected global landscape. In the realm of international relations, culture and identity serve as influential forces that foster mutual understanding, tolerance, and cooperation among nations (Brown, 2000). These elements not only shape the perceptions that states hold of one another but also significantly impact global dynamics by shaping national interests, priorities, and the formation of international institutions and norms. While shared cultural values can facilitate

collaboration and harmony, cultural differences have the potential to breed misunderstandings and conflict, underscoring the intricate role that culture and identity play in shaping global interactions. Moreover, culture and identity wield considerable influence over power dynamics in international relations, with dominant cultures and identities often dictating imbalances of power and privilege (Abdelal et al., 2006). The dynamic underscores the diverse nature of their importance, as they influence not only interactions and priorities between nations but also negotiations, cooperation, and competition on the global stage. Consequently, the recognition and understanding of cultural and identity dynamics are crucial for comprehending the complexities of international relations and the development of the global order.

While some states may apply disproportionate influence and employ over strategies to assert their dominance, the pervasive impact of "standardization" is undeniable, affecting societies worldwide to varying extents. Despite differences in power dynamics, the phenomenon of standardization permeates diverse aspects of life, exerting its influence on individuals and communities across the globe. Standardization manifests itself through various channels, from cultural notes and economic systems to technological advancements and educational frameworks (Bhabha, 2012). Its reach extends far beyond geopolitical boundaries, shaping social norms, consumer behavior, and even personal identities. Dominant postcolonial criticism, as Bhabha specifies it, is "criticism as bearing witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order." This "bearing witness" is a politically highly significant testimonial to the eradication of "class struggle" and the consequent privileging of "ideological struggle".

Bhabha interprets the conflicts through the lens of "cultural difference," emphasizing the concept of "disrespect" as central to understanding the tensions. However, a deeper analysis, as provided by Alex Callinicos (Callinicos, 2004), unveils the riots as a "multi-ethnic" "class rebellion" against oppressive structures. Here, "cultural difference" is not a mystical concept but a political tool for the ruling class to divert attention from systemic exploitation. While Bhabha's book may ultimately compromise with the ideological imperative, which is failing to challenge the underlying structures sustaining inequality and exploitation.

Now it is worth delving into how identity is formed and that human activity and social structure are interconnected and mutually determine each other. Giddens's theory of structuration offers a nuanced perspective on the interplay between individual agency and social structure. It assumes that social life is not merely a collection of random individual actions, nor is it solely determined by overarching social forces. Instead, Giddens argues that human agency and social structure are in constant interaction with each other. Social structure encompasses traditions, institutions, moral codes, and established norms, which are reproduced through the repetitive actions of individuals. However, this process also allows for the possibility of change, as individuals can choose to ignore, replace, or alter these structures. One key aspect of Giddens's theory is the concept of "faith" in the coherence of everyday life. This faith, developed early in life and sustained through ordinary interactions, forms the basis of our trust in social norms and conventions. (Giddens, 2016)

In modern societies characterized by well-developed modernity, self-identity becomes a central concern. Unlike traditional societies where social roles are predefined, individuals in post-traditional societies must navigate and construct their identities independently. Choices regarding clothing, appearance, leisure activities, relationships, beliefs, and occupations are emblematic of this self-identity construction process.

Giddens emphasizes the interconnectedness between the micro-level aspects of society, such as individuals' internal sense of self, and the macro-level structures like the state, multinational corporations, and globalization. These levels of society influence each other and cannot be fully understood in isolation, challenging traditional sociological paradigms that treat them separately.

Consumerism plays a significant role in the development and projection of lifestyle choices, particularly in post-traditional societies where individuals must actively select their roles and behaviors. While wealthy classes may appear to have more options, Giddens argues that lifestyle choices are ubiquitous in modern society. These choices extend beyond material consumption to encompass behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, reflecting the diverse array of options available to individuals in shaping their identities (Ibid; 39).

Lifestyles serve as pre-existing frameworks for crafting personal narratives of self, similar to ready-made templates for storytelling. However, selecting a particular lifestyle

does not dictate a specific life trajectory. Instead, lifestyles resemble genres, offering individuals the opportunity to shape their life narratives according to their preferences and aspirations. Similar to how movie directors choose between romance, western, or horror genres, individuals can opt for metropolitan or rural lifestyles, focusing on career success, socializing, sports, romance, or other pursuits. These lifestyle choices not only provide practical value but also serve as visible expressions of one's self-identity narrative.

In modern society, choices are influenced by a blend of tradition and relative freedom. Daily decisions regarding diet, attire, social interactions, and more contribute to positioning ourselves within specific social categories and defining our identity. As Giddens suggests, the more post-traditional social environments, the more pivotal lifestyle becomes in shaping our core self-identity. Each lifestyle comes with its own set of expectations, shaping perceptions of what actions align or deviate from its character. However, individuals may adopt multiple lifestyles, each adapted to different social contexts or audiences. Giddens terms these distinct lifestyle realms as "lifestyle sectors," outlining aspects of lifestyle associated with work, home life, or other social relationships.

Moreover, the concept of lifestyle sectors underscores the division of identity within various spheres of social engagement. This fragmentation allows individuals to navigate diverse social contexts while projecting different angles of their identity, depending on the setting. Consequently, lifestyle choices serve as strategic markers of self-presentation, facilitating positioning with specific social groups or communities. Through this process, individuals construct multifaceted identities that accommodate the complexities of contemporary social life, integrating tradition with the autonomy to define one's narrative within the broader socio-cultural landscape (Ibid; 78)

The media plays a pivotal role in shaping and distributing various modern lifestyles, a fact that is easily apparent in contemporary society. While certain lifestyles, such as rural farming practices, may not receive significant coverage on news, its often transmitted through more direct channels. In contrast, the media serves as a primary conduit for introducing individuals to less traditional ways of life, supplementing everyday experiences. Although real-life interactions may prompt adjustments to this initial perception, the influence of magazines persists, contributing to associations of the lifestyle with elements like glamour or drug culture. In fact, individuals' perceptions of

certain professions or roles are often influenced by media representations, alongside their personal experiences and training. Additionally, individuals transitioning into new social groups may look to the media for signals on appropriate behaviors, styles, and possessions associated with newfound environment. This process reflects the media's influence in shaping individuals' perceptions of social norms, facilitating their integration into unfamiliar social spheres.

The media presents a spectrum of lifestyle ideals that, while not exhaustive, typically exceed the range encountered in everyday life. This portrayal in modernity offers a platform for celebrating diversity and exploring various possibilities, albeit with certain limitations and narrow interpretations depending on the context. Despite these constraints, certain archetypal story structures and character types resonate deeply with audiences worldwide, reflecting universal themes and experiences. These stories often feature relatable protagonists who confront formidable challenges but ultimately triumph, embodying a sense of resilience and universality that resonates with audiences on a global scale.

Moreover, it is reasonable to suggest, drawing from Giddens' conceptual framework, that individuals draw inspiration from these narratives when crafting their own self-narratives. These stories serve as templates from which individuals construct and shape their identities, borrowing elements that align with their personal experiences and aspirations. By engaging with these narratives, individuals not only find points of connection and resonance but also obtain meaning and guidance for navigating their own life journeys. Thus, the influence of media narratives extends beyond basic entertainment, playing a significant role in shaping individual identities and perspectives within contemporary society.

Much of the appeal of Giddens's work lies in his conviction regarding individuals' inherent capacities and agency. Giddens perceives people as rational agents capable of applying control over their lives, critically evaluating received ideas, and actively shaping their own trajectories. Previous research efforts have underscored people's ability to resist media influence, create their own media content, and saturate television with personal relevance. Such an approach privileges the notion of individuals as thoughtful and inventive beings who exercise autonomy over their existence, a perspective that resonates with the self-perception of most individuals. Any sociological standpoint that contradicts

this view, asserting superiority in understanding human behavior, risks being perceived as insensitive or dehumanizing (Ibid; 100).

A critical examination of Giddens's social theory is offered by Stjepan Mestrovic in the "Anthony Giddens: The Last Modernist" (1998) (Mestrovic, 2005). Mestrovic contends that Giddens's model of social life, centered on rationality and agency, overlooks the complexities of human emotions and sentiments. The persistence of nationalism, often leading to violence and genocide, demonstrates that human actions are not solely guided by rationality. Additionally, Mestrovic critiques Giddens's sociological perspective as appealing primarily to affluent Western sociologists, asserting its limitations in addressing the plight of marginalized and impoverished communities. Despite Giddens's acknowledgment of ethnic conflicts and social issues in his later works, Mestrovic perceives his proposed solutions as simplistic, optimistic, and ultimately unconvincing.

While remains of tradition may sometimes constrain individuals' choices, modern lives are characterized by greater unpredictability and flexibility compared to previous generations. Individuals are tasked with navigating a abundance of lifestyle options suggested by mass media, which offer templates for self-presentation and paths to happiness, although potentially illusory ones. To make sense of the choices available, individuals construct narratives of the self that imbue their lives with coherence and meaning. These narratives are inevitably influenced by perspectives gleaned from media representations, although the intricacies of this relationship are subject to modification through social interactions and experiences.

4.2 Examination of Iran's cultural heritage and traditions and how they have been preserved or challenged in the face of Westernization

Iranian culture, deeply rooted in history, geography, and nation-state thinking, has long been esteemed and celebrated for its rich heritage, encompassing folklore, traditions, rituals, and literary works that span centuries. From ancient times to the present day, Iran's cultural legacy has served as a cornerstone of its national identity, resonating both within its borders and beyond (Amanat, 2017).

However, the advent of globalization has presented significant challenges to Iranian culture, posing threats to its national and religious identities. The erosion of

national identity is evident in the face of globalization's homogenizing forces, which diminish the distinctiveness of Iranian traditions and customs, leading to a decline in cultural authenticity and a sense of historical continuity. Moreover, the pervasive influence of Western media and information waves has marginalized religious identities, challenging the prominence of Iran's Islamic heritage and values. (Amanat, 2017)

In contemporary Iran, new media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping cultural dynamics and influencing societal perceptions. Despite government restrictions, social networking sites like Facebook and news websites such as Gooya News continue to attract widespread usage, serving as alternative channels for accessing information and engaging with global discourse (Shirazi, 2010).

Despite conservative views condemning satellite channels as detrimental to religious values and societal norms, channels like Farsil have garnered significant viewership, offering a mix of international content tailored to conservative Iranian audiences. Farsil's popularity underscores the complex interplay between media, culture, and societal values in contemporary Iran, where traditional norms intersect with globalized media influences (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010).

What role does cultural memory play in these processes? Cultural memory serves as a repository of values, symbols, and rituals that embody a society's self-image and collective identity, particularly crucial for nations seeking to assert their place in the globalized world. The preservation of cultural heritage forms the essence of national identity, providing a sense of continuity and belonging amidst the currents of globalization. As societies navigate the complexities of the modern world, understanding one's identity, historical roots, and future aspirations becomes paramount, laying the foundation for meaningful participation in the global arena.

Exploring Iranian identity presents multifaceted challenges, stemming from its intricate historical legacy and diverse demographic landscape. The evolution of Iranian identity is influenced by encounters with various imperial powers, alongside the enduring impact of nationalist ideologies. Scholars offer differing perspectives, ranging from viewing nationhood as a modern construct shaped by European models to emphasizing the role of imagined communities and administrative language in fostering national cohesion. Contemporary discourses on Iranian identity draw from theoretical frameworks

such as nationalism, post-modernism, and globalization, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the complex between history, culture, and societal dynamics.

The search to comprehend Iranian identity unveils the challenge of accessing comprehensive knowledge about its historical trajectory and diverse dimensions. Limited native written sources pose a significant obstacle to researchers seeking to unravel the intricacies of Iranian identity formation. Identity, a product of collective self-awareness and historical experiences, evolves through the interplay of various factors, including history, geography, and collective memory. However, the traditional essentialist view of identity as a fixed entity undergoes transformation in the era of globalization, where communities grapple with evolving cultural landscapes and shifting notions of identity.

In the book "Iran Without Borders: Towards a Critique of a Postcolonial Nation" Hamid Dabashi delves into the intricacies of Iranian national identity, offering valuable insights that extend beyond the confines of Iran itself. The author challenges prevailing narratives that seek to confine Iranian culture and identity within the rigid boundaries of political borders, which he aptly describes as "fictive frontiers." Instead, he argues for a more nuanced understanding that acknowledges the interconnectedness of Iranian culture with that of neighboring regions and beyond, encompassing diverse influences from Turkish, British, Indian, German, Afghan, French, and Arab cultures (Dabashi, 2016).

Central to Dabashi's argument is the rejection of attempts by post-constitutional revolutionary regimes to suppress the cosmopolitan nature of Iranian identity. He highlights instances such as the mobilization of the Green Movement in response to the 2009 Iranian elections as evidence of the enduring resilience of this cosmopolitan identity. Despite efforts by successive Iranian governments to impose rigid secular monarchism or monopolistic theocracy, Dabashi contends that Iran's cultural identity remains inherently linked to global influences and regional connections. By shedding light on the dynamic and multifaceted nature of Iranian identity, Dabashi's work not only challenges prevailing misconceptions but also contributes to broader discussions within global discourse. It emphasizes the need to move beyond simplistic narratives that seek to essentialize national identities and instead embrace a more inclusive understanding that recognizes the fluidity and interconnectedness of cultures across geographical and political boundaries.

In the seminal work "Negative Dialectics" (T. Adorno, 2003) Adorno critiques the traditional understanding of dialectics, which posits that from the clash of contradictions arises a positive synthesis. Hegel and Marx viewed dialectics as a progressive force leading towards the realization of human freedom through historical development. However, Adorno challenges this optimistic view, especially in the wake of the Holocaust, by highlighting the potential for negative outcomes and the prevalence of irrationality in history. Adorno's aim is to inject the reality of suffering and unreason into the dialectical process, acknowledging that not all historical trajectories lead to positive outcomes.

Adorno's concept of "negative dialectics" seeks to reconcile the existence of negative outcomes within the framework of positive dialectical forces. By rejecting the idea of an inherently positive, rational progression towards an Absolute, Adorno allows for a more nuanced understanding of historical materialism. This liberation from the teleological assumption of positive results enables the recognition of alternative forms of power dynamics, such as soft power and asymmetric warfare, which do not necessarily lead to conventional notions of progress. Moreover, Adorno's framework acknowledges that these power dynamics are not limited to interstate relations but also manifest within societies, as seen in the struggle between state apparatuses and the populations they seek to govern.

In essence, Adorno's concept of negative dialectics offers a critical perspective on the traditional understanding of dialectical processes. By incorporating the reality of negative outcomes and irrational forces into the dialectical framework, Adorno expands the scope of historical analysis and opens up new possibilities for understanding power dynamics and social struggles. This approach allows for a more comprehensive examination of historical events and societal structures, acknowledging the complexity and ambiguity inherent in human history (Ibid;313).

The complex interplay among Iran, the Arab World, and the United States signifies a dynamic and ever-evolving relationship characterized by instability. This triad reflects broader dialectical shifts in global politics, indicating a multipolar landscape where no single actor holds absolute control. The United States seeks to assert its dominance in the region to advance its imperial interests and neoliberal economic agenda, perpetuating constitutional injustices both domestically and internationally. Meanwhile,

the Iranian regime suppresses democratic movements within its borders while strategically leveraging its soft power to enhance its geopolitical influence in the region and beyond.

Within the Arab world, regimes often prioritize self-preservation over social justice and economic equality, perpetuating a status quo that fails to meet the urgent needs of their populations. When analyzing this power dynamic, it becomes essential to explore avenues through which it can be subverted in favor of revolutionary forces. However, such a transformation requires transcending the postcolonial condition and its artificial boundaries, allowing for the mobilization of latent forces beyond conventional dichotomies such as secular versus religious, Arab versus Iranian, or Sunni versus Shi'i. Ultimately, challenging the dominance of the established order necessitates reimagining a world that transcends entrenched power structures and embraces a more inclusive and equitable global order (Dabashi, 2016).

In contemplating the reconceptualization of the left in regions such as the Arab and Iranian worlds, as well as extending into Asia, Africa, and Latin America, "Negative Dialectics" offers profound insights. Penned amidst a tumultuous period marked by the aftermath of the Jewish Holocaust, the collapse of the Soviet model in the USSR, and the wave of European protests in 1968, Adorno's reflections are particularly poignant. He sought to grapple with the enduring legacy of colonialism and imperialism, advocating for a new paradigm of knowledge production to confront the challenges of the postcolonial era.

Adorno's critique of the classical understanding of dialectics is foundational to his framework. The author challenged the notion that positive outcomes necessarily emerge from the contradiction between two negations, instead emphasizing the reality of suffering and unreason in post-Holocaust Europe. By dismantling the expectation of a linear, progressive movement towards the Absolute, Adorno introduced the concept of "negative dialectics," which acknowledges the possibility of negative outcomes resulting from conflicting positive forces. Adorno's critical perspective serves as a call to action in modern age where the boundaries between entertainment and information have become increasingly blurred. "Negative dialectic" offers to engage in a deeper examination of media narratives, recognizing the ideological and cultural assumptions that shape opinions. (T. Adorno, 2003).

In the contemporary context, characterized by events such as the Green Movement and the Arab revolutions, Adorno's insights into negative dialectics remain highly relevant. The trajectory of historical actors often produces unintended consequences, as evident in the divergent paths pursued by Iran and Saudi Arabia. Despite their contrasting approaches, both countries contribute to the dismantling of revolutionary forces threatening their respective interests. Adorno's framework offers a lens through which to understand these contradictions, highlighting the convergence of conflicting positive forces that can block revolutionary momentum and it challenges simplistic narratives of dialectical tensions leading inexorably to positive outcomes, underscoring the need to navigate darker territories in world history.

In conclusion, the exploration of Iranian identity navigates through a labyrinth of historical legacies, sociocultural dynamics, and global influences. Rather, Iranians hold with the complexities of the modern world, preserving cultural heritage and fostering a nuanced understanding of identity emerge as imperative attempts in charting a course towards a meaningful engagement with the global community. While Iranian culture remains deeply entrenched in history and tradition, it faces profound challenges in an era marked by globalization and the proliferation of new media. The ongoing tension between preserving cultural heritage and embracing global influences reflects the complex dynamics shaping contemporary Iranian society.

4.3 Reflection on the future trajectory of the East in the face of continued Western influence and global geopolitical shifts

The contrasting approaches to human freedom and knowledge between the Western and Eastern civilizations have left indelible marks on their respective cultural activities. In the West, the emphasis has been on the development of science, characterized by objectivity and critical methodology. This scientific pursuit underscores the importance of independent judgment, leading to a robust individualism and fervent nationalism. The driving force behind science is the desire to conquer nature, resulting in the West's acquisition of immense power over natural resources and the establishment of a civilization marked by abundance and the ideology of progress.

In contrast, Eastern cultures have traditionally placed greater importance on inner freedom and self-conquest. While dominion and warfare may have motivated some

individuals, wealth was not held in high regard. The Eastern pursuit of self-realization through discipline creates profound tensions in the soul, demanding supreme concentration to attain the absolute truth. As a result of these differing philosophical orientations, the concept of the individual and the communal group manifest differently in Eastern societies. While communal groups are acknowledged for their role in everyday life, loyalty to these groups remains secondary to the pursuit of personal enlightenment. Consequently, Eastern cultures have not embraced the individualism and nationalism seen in the West. Overall, the contrasting perspectives on human freedom and knowledge have shaped the cultural landscapes of the East and West, leading to divergent expressions in their respective cultural engagements.

In the contemporary era, the communication landscape surrounding global conflicts, like the Iraq war, has undergone a profound metamorphosis driven by advancements in technology. This evolution has ushered in an era of unprecedented access to information, spanning from traditional print media to satellite television and online news platforms. However, this surge in information availability has not necessarily equated to an enhancement in its quality, revealing a disconnect between the sophistication of news delivery mechanisms and the substance of the news content itself.

For policymakers, this transformation has drastically altered the terrain, with the widespread accessibility of information reshaping the dynamics of global communication. In the past, the US government could rely on domestic news outlets, particularly those employing satellite transmission like CNN, to propagate its narrative worldwide. However, subsequent conflicts, such as the Iraq War, saw a departure from this model, with American media losing its monopoly over global attention. This shift resulted in a more diverse and contested media landscape, presenting policymakers with new challenges in shaping public opinion and garnering support for policy initiatives, including military interventions.

Moreover, this diversification of media sources has led to the emergence of distinct identities and perspectives within the global discourse surrounding conflicts. With access to a multitude of news outlets and platforms, individuals can now seek out information that aligns with their beliefs and identities, contributing to the formation of echo chambers and reinforcing preexisting biases. Consequently, policymakers must navigate a fragmented media landscape characterized by competing narratives and entrenched

viewpoints, requiring them to adopt more nuanced and strategic communication strategies to convey their messages effectively.

The pervasive tendency within Western discourse to define development through the lens of Western values, which often portrays the non-Western world as a perilous space. This narrative casts poverty as the primary threat to Western well-being, overshadowing other global concerns. The Western media, both within the metropolis and in Third World regions, play a significant role in perpetuating this worldview (Wanta et al., 2004). The author suggests that the media, particularly in their exclusion function, shape the framing of international issues for domestic consumption, influencing public perception and agenda setting. Despite the disconnect between international stories and personal experience, the media constructs a pseudo-reality through repeated messaging, shaping public understanding and priorities. Moreover, Western media leverage their technological and educational advantages to extend their agenda-setting influence to Third World countries as "cultural imperialism." (Bankoff, 2001)

The training of foreign journalists in Western nations leads to their assimilation into Western media culture, perpetuating the dominance of Western paradigms in information dissemination. Without a domestic ideological perspective to counterbalance this influence, media in developing nations operate within an adopted Western framework, further entrenching the hegemony of Western discourse. Such dynamic underscores the interrelations of media imperialism and the imposition of Western values in shaping global narratives on development and well-being.

The concept of soft power in the Western context, particularly American, depends on three primary resources: culture, political values, and foreign policies. However, the effectiveness of these resources in influencing others depends on certain conditions being met, such as the attractiveness of American culture to others and the alignment of its political values with its actions at home and abroad. Additionally, the legitimacy and moral authority of American foreign policies play a crucial role in determining the range of its soft power. Importantly, the perception of the target audience is paramount in soft power dynamics, highlighting the significance of mutual understanding and respect between agents and targets (Nye Jr, 1990).

Culture, as a soft power resource, encompasses the patterns of social behaviors through which groups transmit knowledge and values. It exists on various levels, ranging

from universal aspects to national and group-specific traits. While some analysts view soft power as a form of cultural imperialism, arguing that American culture has imposed a hegemonic liberal dialogue, others emphasize the complexity of global politics, characterized by competing narratives and diverse value systems. Although American values may be connected with many individuals worldwide, they are not universally accepted, and different cultures maintain their distinct identities and priorities.

The ability to influence global discourse through soft power involves empowering and weakening mechanisms that shape targets' preferences and self-interest. While some may perceive American dominance over contemporary communications as forceful, it is essential to differentiate between indoctrination and free choice. In an information age where participation and freedom of expression are increasingly valued, shared values can serve as a basis for American soft power that operates dualistically. However, the diverse political landscape and cultural identities worldwide challenge the notion of American hegemony over discourse, emphasizing the persistence of local cultures and the importance of respecting diverse perspectives in global affairs.

In the contemporary landscape of power diffusion and the "rise of the rest," the narrative of smart power for the twenty-first century diverges from the traditional pursuit of maximizing power or maintaining hegemony. Instead, it revolves around the strategic combination of resources to achieve success in this new context. While American leadership remains significant in global affairs due to its status as the largest power, conventional narratives depicting an "American century" or narratives of American decline are inadequate in addressing the challenges of the current era. A smart strategy necessitates clarity regarding goals, resources, and tactics, linking means to ends effectively. Central to a smart strategy are clear and prioritized goals or outcomes. Given the constraints of reality, simply constructing an extensive request list is insufficient. Setting priorities enables the structure of compromises and guides decision-making processes. Moreover, understanding the distinction between concrete possession goals and broader structural goals is essential. Additionally, discerning between goals that entail balanced power dynamics and those that entail collaborative efforts for mutual gains is crucial. By addressing these questions, a smart strategy can effectively navigate the complexities of contemporary global dynamics and achieve sustainable outcomes (Nye Jr, 1990).

In this context, the Western concept of smart power acknowledges the pivotal role of American leadership while recognizing the need to move beyond narratives of uncontrolled American dominance or decline. It emphasizes the strategic use of resources and the setting of clear, prioritized goals to address the challenges posed by power diffusion and the changing global landscape.

In the discourse surrounding Western media influence on the East, the concepts of negative and positive freedom offer insightful perspectives on the dynamics of individual autonomy and societal transformation. Negative freedom, synonymous with the absence of interference or coercion, often reflects Western liberal ideals and has been historically associated with the promotion of individual rights and freedoms. However, in the context of Eastern societies, the advocacy for negative freedom can be viewed through the lens of cultural imperialism, where Western values and norms are imposed upon traditional Eastern frameworks. This imposition may trigger tensions over issues such as censorship, political dissent, and the preservation of cultural heritage, challenging the self-identity of Eastern societies as they navigate the complexities of modernization and globalization (Berlin, 2017).

In contrast, positive freedom evokes deeply with Eastern aspirations for self-determination and empowerment in the face of external influences. Emphasizing the ability to shape one's destiny and assert autonomy, positive freedom empowers Eastern societies to safeguard their unique identities among the forces of Westernization and globalization. The pursuit of positive freedom entails reclaiming agency over political, economic, and cultural domains, resisting external domination and asserting the right to self-determination. This internal struggle for self-identity is complexly intertwined with the broader discourse on Western influence, shaping the trajectory of Eastern societies as they seek to navigate the complexities of the contemporary global landscape.

The interaction between negative and positive conceptions of freedom within Eastern societies reflects a complex internal discourse, influenced by external pressures and internal dynamics. As Eastern populations struggle with competing visions of individual liberty, collective solidarity, and cultural authenticity, they are compelled to forge adaptive strategies to preserve their identities in the face of continued Western influence and global geopolitical shifts. By examining these concepts within the broader context of Western media influence on the East, it is helping to gain deeper insights into

the evolving dynamics of cultural exchange, political struggle, and societal transformation in the twenty-first century (Berlin, 2017).

Conclusions

5.1 Summary of the research findings

In this thesis, the attempt is made to explore the steady emergence and consolidation of power dominance, from its historical roots to its contemporary expressions. Starting with an examination of colonial and postcolonial theories, the exploration delved into the historical processes of colonialism and imperialism that laid the basis for the development of Critical theory. Through this lens, it was possible to gain insights into the power dynamics essential in colonial encounters and the imposition of Western ideologies on colonized societies. This historical analysis provided a foundational understanding of how power structures were established and maintained through the control and exploitation of colonized peoples, shaping the trajectory of modern societies and their interactions. Additionally, the study explored the nuances of decolonization movements and the challenges faced in dismantling dominant narratives and structures of oppression. By examining the evolution of power dominance from its historical origins, the thesis aimed to illustrate its enduring influence and relevance in contemporary global affairs.

It is important to highlight that, this thesis underscores the importance of Critical analysis in understanding and challenging power dominance. By questioning dominant narratives, promoting intercultural dialogue, and fostering awareness of power dynamics towards a more equitable society. The comprehensive analysis of the literature has provided invaluable insights into the various aspects of the problem. Additionally, thorough examination of relevant literature has laid a solid foundation for addressing the research tasks effectively. The exploration of the Dialectic of Enlightenment has provided valuable insights into the manifestation of dominance in opinion formation, highlighting the role of external forces in guiding and standardizing the views and behavior of the masses. This critical understanding underscores the importance of interrogating media narratives and recognizing their potential for manipulation and selectivity in shaping public discourse.

In fact, during the coverage of protest events in Iran, Western media emphasized the influence of religion in the country, portraying it as closed off from innovation and resistant to Western values. This portrayal reinforces stereotypes and limits the diversity of representations, hindering efforts towards mutual understanding and dialogue.

Furthermore, the narrative surrounding the protests in Iran has highlighted the bravery of demonstrators while also reflecting a common theme of Western interventionism. Western nations, while expressing support for the oppressed, have been accused of contributing to their suffering through policies, sanctions, and military actions. Within Western discourse, Iran is frequently framed in a way that emphasizes its perceived differences from Western norms and values, perpetuating stereotypes and limiting alternative voices and perspectives. This framing sustains cultural divergence and obstructs efforts towards mutual understanding and dialogue. In analyzing Western media's portrayal of Iran, researchers have identified two distinct lines of empirical investigation, both of which underscore the importance of critically examining media representations and their implications for Iranian society and its interactions with the global community.

The evolution of Iranian identity, shaped by encounters with imperial powers and nationalist ideologies, reflects a complex interaction between history, culture, and societal dynamics. Contemporary discourses on Iranian identity draw from diverse theoretical frameworks, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing non-Western and Iranian society in an era of globalization. The tension between preserving cultural heritage and Western influences underscores the need for ongoing dialogue and critical reflection on the politics of representation in media.

The incorporation of Critical Theory within the context of contemporary realities has provided a comprehensive understanding of the existing societal issues and has been instrumental in uncovering underlying power dynamics and biases, enabling a more thorough examination of the problems at hand. Without engaging with Critical Theory, a nuanced and constructive perspective would be inconceivable, this study successfully achieved its set goals and objectives. Specifically, analysis of media representation has implications for promoting intercultural understanding and dialogue by challenging dominant narratives, fostering empathy and respect for cultural differences, and ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable global distance.

5.2 Contribution of the study to the existing theoretical frameworks

It is essential to continue advocating for media literacy and diversity in representation to counter biased and one-sided narratives. Enlightening the audience about the complexities of culture and encouraging critical engagement with media content can help break stereotypes and promote intercultural dialogue. Furthermore, future research could explore alternative media platforms and grassroots initiatives that amplify diverse voices and narratives, fostering a more inclusive and interconnected global discourse.

This research highlights the pivotal role of media in shaping perceptions, attitudes, and interactions between cultures. By critically analyzing the politics of representation, the aim is to challenge stereotypes, promote empathy, and contribute to a more inclusive and understanding global society. The importance of fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual respect, this research may possibly inspire further inquiry and action towards creating a more equitable and harmonious world. The study makes significant contributions to existing theoretical frameworks, particularly in the realms of Critical theory, media studies, and cultural studies. Firstly, by applying the insights of the Dialectic of Enlightenment to the analysis of media representations, it helped to deepen understanding of how power operates in the sphere of opinion formation. The examination of dominant narratives and their influence on public discourse clarifies the mechanisms through which ideologies are reinforced, contributing to the reproduction of power imbalances. Secondly, the study contributes to media studies by offering a critical analysis of Western media's portrayal of Muslims and Iran. By uncovering patterns of negative stereotypes and Orientalist tropes, the research exposes the limitations and biases inherent in mainstream media representations. This analysis provides valuable insights into the role of media in shaping public perceptions and attitudes, highlighting the need for more nuanced and culturally sensitive reporting.

Additionally, it contributes to cultural studies by exploring the complexities of identity formation in the context of globalization and new media. Through the examination of Iranian identity and its evolution, the research illuminates the ways in which an understanding of the dynamics of cultural change and continuity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for promoting intercultural understanding and dialogue. By raising awareness of the politics of representation in media, the research encourages media consumers to critically engage with the narratives they encounter and to seek out alternative perspectives. This enhancement of media literacy can facilitate more informed and empathetic interactions between cultures, ultimately contributing to a more connected and harmonious global society.

Ultimately, this study underscores the significance of applying theoretical conceptualizations to contemporary issues and challenges. By conceptualizing theories within the framework of modern problems, it highlights the relevance and practical utility of theoretical insights in addressing pressing societal concerns and advancing critical understanding.

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