

We Keep America On Top Of The World Television Journalism And The Public Sphere Communication And Society

We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism, the Public Sphere, and Shaping Society

The phrase "We Keep America on Top of the World" evokes a powerful image, often associated with a specific era of American television news broadcasting. This article delves into the role of this type of television journalism—characterized by a patriotic and often triumphalist narrative—in shaping public discourse, impacting the public sphere, and influencing American society's understanding of its place in the world. We will explore the profound effects of this style of reporting, examining its strengths and weaknesses, its lasting legacy, and its relevance in today's vastly changed media landscape. Key aspects to be analyzed include its influence on **foreign policy**, the construction of **national identity**, the evolution of **media bias**, and its contributions to the broader field of **mass communication**. Finally, we'll consider the ethical implications inherent in such a powerful form of media storytelling.

The Rise of Triumphalist Television News

The post-World War II era saw the rise of television as a dominant force in American life. Networks like CBS, NBC, and ABC invested heavily in news divisions, cultivating on-screen personalities who became household names. This period witnessed the development of a particular style of television journalism, often characterized by a strong sense of American

exceptionalism and a narrative emphasizing American dominance in global affairs. Programs frequently portrayed the United States as a benevolent superpower, actively working to secure freedom and democracy worldwide, often neglecting or downplaying less flattering aspects of American foreign policy. This "We Keep America on Top of the World" approach, while often implicit rather than explicitly stated, shaped public perception significantly.

Constructing National Identity and Foreign Policy

The visual power of television, combined with the carefully curated narratives of these news broadcasts, played a crucial role in shaping national identity. Images of American prosperity, technological advancements, and military might were consistently juxtaposed against portrayals of foreign threats and instability, reinforcing a sense of American exceptionalism and justifying interventionist foreign policies. The Vietnam War, for example, demonstrates this complex relationship. While the war's increasingly grim reality challenged the triumphant narrative, television coverage often continued to emphasize the American mission, even as public opinion shifted against the conflict. This highlights the powerful capacity of television news to both reflect and shape public sentiment regarding **foreign policy** decisions.

This approach wasn't just about reporting facts; it involved crafting a specific narrative—one that emphasized American strength and global leadership. This involved careful selection of what to cover, how to frame it, and which voices were included or excluded. This editorial process heavily influenced audience understanding of international events and consequently, their views on **mass communication** and its role in shaping public perception.

The Evolution of Media Bias and its Impact

The "We Keep America on Top of the World" style of journalism inevitably involved biases, both overt and subtle. The focus on showcasing American successes often came at the expense of critical analysis or balanced reporting. Different perspectives, especially those critical of American policy, were frequently marginalized or ignored. This creates a skewed understanding of events, contributing to a lack of critical engagement with

the complexities of foreign policy and international relations. The consequence was a public sphere often lacking in diverse perspectives and susceptible to manipulation via carefully constructed narratives. Understanding the nature of **media bias** during this era is crucial for appreciating how television news influenced public opinion and continues to do so.

The Legacy and Contemporary Relevance

While the explicitly triumphalist style of television news that defined a previous era has diminished, its legacy remains. The emphasis on strong visual storytelling, the cultivation of trusted on-screen personalities, and the power of carefully crafted narratives are all features still prominent in contemporary television news, though presented often with a degree of self-awareness. The challenges of maintaining journalistic integrity while engaging a broad audience remain a key consideration for today's news organizations. Analyzing the "We Keep America on Top of the World" approach provides valuable insight into the ongoing tension between objectivity, national pride, and effective storytelling in the field of **communication and society**.

Conclusion

The analysis of television journalism's "We Keep America on Top of the World" approach offers a valuable lens through which to examine the power of media in shaping public perception, influencing foreign policy, and constructing national identity. While the overtly triumphalist narratives of the past may be less prevalent, the underlying mechanisms of shaping public discourse through carefully curated narratives and the selection of specific storylines remain relevant today. Understanding this historical context helps us critically analyze contemporary media landscapes and navigate the complexities of information in the digital age.

FAQ

Q1: How did the Cold War impact the "We Keep America on Top of the World" narrative?

A1: The Cold War significantly fueled this narrative. The constant ideological struggle with the Soviet Union provided a framework for portraying the US as a defender of freedom against communist tyranny.

This narrative justified substantial military spending and interventionist foreign policy, all framed positively within the television news broadcasts.

Q2: Were there any counter-narratives to the dominant "America on Top" message?

A2: Yes, although often marginalized. Independent journalists, alternative media outlets, and dissenting voices within academia and the political sphere challenged the dominant narrative, highlighting the human cost of American foreign policy and questioning the assumption of American exceptionalism. However, these counter-narratives often had limited reach compared to the established television networks.

Q3: How did this type of journalism contribute to the rise of public cynicism towards the media?

A3: The perceived lack of objectivity and the consistent portrayal of a one-sided view contributed to public distrust. As the limitations and biases of this approach became more apparent, particularly during events like the Vietnam War, public cynicism towards mainstream media grew.

Q4: What ethical considerations arise from the "We Keep America on Top of the World" approach to journalism?

A4: Key ethical concerns include the potential for manipulation, the suppression of dissenting viewpoints, and the distortion of reality to serve a particular political agenda. The responsibility of journalists to provide accurate and unbiased information is paramount, a responsibility frequently challenged by this approach.

Q5: How does this historical context inform our understanding of contemporary media bias?

A5: Understanding the historical bias helps us recognize similar patterns today. While the overt triumphalism may be less pronounced, the influence of political and economic forces on media narratives remains a significant factor in shaping public opinion. Critical media literacy is crucial to navigate these biases effectively.

Q6: Can you provide specific examples of television programs that embodied this narrative?

A6: Early evening news broadcasts on CBS, NBC, and ABC during the Cold

War and the Vietnam War era frequently embodied this narrative. While specific programs didn't explicitly use the phrase "We Keep America on Top of the World," their consistent portrayal of American strength and global leadership reflected this implicit message. Documentaries and special reports often reinforced this image.

Q7: How did this style of reporting influence public support for military interventions?

A7: By consistently portraying the US as a force for good in the world and downplaying negative consequences of interventions, this style of reporting often fostered public support for military actions, even when those actions proved controversial or morally questionable.

Q8: What lessons can contemporary journalists learn from this historical period?

A8: Contemporary journalists can learn the crucial importance of critical self-reflection, striving for objectivity, and actively seeking diverse perspectives in their reporting. They should be mindful of the potential for bias in their storytelling and committed to transparency and accountability. The legacy of "We Keep America on Top of the World" serves as a cautionary tale about the powerful influence of media and the ethical responsibilities that accompany that power.

We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism, the Public Sphere, and Communication in Society

The seemingly straightforward phrase "We Keep America on Top of the World" brings forth a potent representation – a nation dominant in global affairs, its authority projected through various means. This article explores how television journalism, as a pivotal component of the public sphere, has acted a substantial role in forming this perception, both truthfully and untruthfully. We will examine the complex interplay between televised news, public discourse, and the construction of national identity.

The Power of the Visual Narrative:

Television news, unlike its print or radio counterparts, possesses the unique ability to construct powerful visual narratives. The carefully

selected imagery, the inflection of the anchors' voices, the score accompanying the segments – all add to the overall narrative being transmitted. This skill to shape emotional responses through visual storytelling has been wielded to foster a sense of American exceptionalism and global leadership. Think of the iconic images used during the Cold War, showing American prosperity and technological advancement juxtaposed against images of Soviet poverty. This visual rhetoric efficiently framed the US as a beacon of hope and freedom in the struggle against communism.

Framing the Narrative: Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping:

Television journalism plays a crucial role in setting the public agenda. The choice of which stories to cover and the angle from which they are presented represents a powerful form of "gatekeeping." By emphasizing certain incidents and de-emphasizing others, news organizations can influence public opinion and guide the national conversation. For example, the constant coverage of American military successes (however trivial) while offering less coverage to civilian casualties or the long-term consequences of military interventions added to sustain a narrative of American power.

The Public Sphere and Deliberative Democracy:

The concept of the public sphere, as outlined by Jürgen Habermas, refers to a space where citizens involve in rational and critical discourse to affect public policy. However, the truth of the televised public sphere is often more complex. The dominance of a few large media conglomerates can limit the diversity of voices and viewpoints presented, leading to a standardization of news. Furthermore, the focus on entertainment and viewership can compromise the pursuit of objective journalism and in-depth analysis.

The Impact of Cable News and the 24/7 News Cycle:

The advent of cable news and the 24/7 news cycle has further complicated the relationship between television journalism and the public sphere. The constant demand for new content has caused to a reliance on "infotainment" – a combination of information and entertainment – often at the expense of accuracy and context. The rise of partisan news channels has also fragmented the public, creating filter bubbles where individuals are primarily exposed to news that supports their pre-existing views.

Moving Forward: Critical Media Literacy and Responsible Journalism:

To ensure that television journalism contributes positively to the public sphere, a greater emphasis on media literacy is crucial. Citizens need to be equipped with the abilities to critically analyze the information they acquire from television news, to recognize bias, and to seek out diverse opinions. Simultaneously, journalists have a duty to uphold the highest ethical standards, to strive for accuracy and objectivity, and to offer the public with the information they need to engage meaningfully in a democratic society.

Conclusion:

"We Keep America on Top of the World" is not merely a motto, but a complex narrative constructed and reinforced through various means, including television journalism. While television news has the potential to inform and empower citizens, its impact can also be influential and divisive. Promoting media literacy and holding journalists accountable for ethical conduct are vital steps in ensuring a more educated and involved citizenry.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

Q1: How can I become more media literate?

A1: Practice critical thinking when consuming news. Consider the source, identify potential biases, and seek out multiple perspectives before forming an opinion. Engage in discussions about the news with others who hold different viewpoints.

Q2: What is the role of social media in shaping public opinion alongside television news?

A2: Social media significantly amplifies and sometimes distorts the narratives presented by television news. It facilitates rapid dissemination of information (and misinformation), creating echo chambers and further polarizing public opinion.

Q3: How can journalists ensure ethical reporting in the age of 24/7 news?

A3: Prioritizing accuracy over speed, acknowledging limitations, and

actively seeking diverse sources are critical steps. Journalists should also strive for transparency about their own biases and potential conflicts of interest.

Q4: What is the future of television journalism in the digital age?

A4: The future likely involves a convergence of traditional television journalism with digital platforms. Adaptability and innovation will be essential for news organizations to remain relevant and maintain a dedicated audience.

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