



VIETNAM AS A POTENTIAL MEDIA IN VIET THANH NGUYEN'S NOVEL *THE SYMPATHIZER* (2015)

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Abstract

The purpose of this analysis are to expose the issue of Vietnam as a potential media and to know the contribution of the implied author in revealing the meaning of Vietnam as a potential media. This analysis is related to the concept of *Neo-colonialism* by Kwame Nkrumah and Hegemony by Gramsci that is supported by the text and context based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows that America utilises Vietnam as their media of promotion which can be seen from their policy and economy intervention.

Key words: Vietnam, Potential, Media.

A. INTRODUCTION

Geographically, Vietnam is in the centre of Southeast Asia. This country is located on the eastern margin of the Indochinese peninsula. It is verged with Cambodia, Laos and China. The geographical location of this coastal country has made Vietnam become a trading track- a central point for trade- in Southeast Asia region for long time. This attracted other countries like China and France to overtake this country. As a result, Vietnam experienced economic exploitation and it was set up as an administrative centre.

The country with a strategic geographical location like Vietnam is chosen by developed countries to promote themselves. America, for instance, is one of the developed countries which viewed Vietnam as a potential place to promote their products. Interestingly, their products are promoted through creating conflicts in Vietnam. The conflicts eventually turned up to be the Vietnam War. This war becomes America's main entrance to expand their influence. America utilises this chaotic condition since it can be the spotlight to exhibit American interest. Hence, they consider Vietnam as a potential media to succeed their goal.

America wants to sell their products like culture, entertainment, daily needs and many more. They want to construct how Asian must view the American products; culture, education, entertainment and daily needs as the best products

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that they must consume. In short, America wants to Americanise Asia. Vietnam in this case, is needed as their media to inform and persuade other countries in South East Asia to buy their products. Media in general is known as a tool that is used to store and deliver information. Meanwhile, Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary of English (2015) describes media as a substance or material which is used for particular purpose or in order to produce a particular effect. Moreover, Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2005) describes potential as the unrealized ability to do something. In this case, Vietnam as potential media is used as America's tool to deliver information about their goodwill. Their ultimate goal was actually to have political and financial influences worldwide. America in this case needs Vietnam as a promoting agent to attract and persuade developing countries nearby to have political and economic relationship with them.

Politically, America wants to have unlimited access toward government policies in developing countries. In other words, they want to have control in all aspects of life in developing countries. Meanwhile, economically, they want to become the centre of world's economy. This goal can be reached by America by pretending to be the saviour of developing countries especially for the conflict area like Vietnam. Therefore, they promise to provide security, especially for South Vietnamese citizens. They assure to secure South Vietnam country economically, politically and militarily. This is done as a promoting strategy to show to the developing countries that America is a friend.

When a developing country like Vietnam is having a conflict, it will surely be in need of support. America sees this as an open opportunity for them to promote their products. One of the ways is by being an ally of South Vietnam. They fulfil all the needs of this country. For instance, they supply all military devices for South Vietnamese soldiers. They even help South Vietnam in the battle field by sending military forces. They provide South Vietnamese refugees with camps. They provide South Vietnamese citizens with primary needs like foods, cloths, medical assistances, medicines and many more. They also let South Vietnamese children to get education. America even provides the children with scholarship to study in America. Thus, America did their best to appear like an angel to the Vietnamese. Acting as a saviour for developing countries especially Vietnam, America actually aims at binding political relationship with Southeast Asia countries. And thus, Vietnam is seen as an effective media to inform and promote all American products throughout the Asian region.

This study examines the issue of American efforts to use Vietnam as a potential media in informing and promoting American products in underdeveloped countries in Southeast Asia. Their biggest goal is to dominate Southeast Asia and then be seen as the world superpower country. This sensitive issue is also exposed in a literary work entitled *The Sympathizer* (2015) written by Viet Thanh Nguyen. This also becomes the main reason why this book is tempting to be discussed where emphasis will be placed on how America uses Vietnam as a media to reach their goal to become a super power country among the developing countries in Southeast Asia.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of novel *The Sympathizer* (2015) by Viet Thanh Nguyen is done through text and context-based interpretation. Implied author as a strategy is used to reveal the meaning of the novel. It discloses Vietnam as Potential Media by examining narrator's confession as a double agent in Vietnam War. Implied author can be comprehended in two ways. They are by reconstructing the story of the text and interpreting the meaning of the text by reading between the lines. This analysis deals with the concept of neo-colonialism by Kwame Nkrumah and hegemony by Gramsci.

C. DISCUSSION

This section reveals the issue of *Vietnam as a potential media* by using implied author. There are two strategies used by America in order to make Vietnam as their media. There are American policy and their interference in economy of Vietnam.

1. American Policy

America applies their policies to use Vietnam as their media. They attempt to hide their real intention beyond their policies. There are three policies applied in order to utilize Vietnam as an effective media of promotion, they are civil right, military backup and cultural policy.

America guarantees the safety of Vietnamese people. They even promise the freedom for these refugees. The following statements support this argument:

“Just when the self-flagellation was beginning to wear me down, we were picked up and shuttled on to Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California, this time via an airliner where I sat in a real seat with a real window. Awaiting us was another refugee camp, its higher grade of amenities evidence that we were already profiting from the upward mobility of the American Dream. “(p.73)

From narrator's statements, it can be pictured that America places Vietnam as the sample of their kind-hearted that always offer help to every country in need. This good image tends to be built when America gives security to South Vietnamese refugees by providing shelters. Moreover, they facilitate these refugees with air transportation. America even lets these refugees to become American citizen. This condition can be shown in this following sentence, “*we were picked up and shuttled on to Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California*”. By facilitating these refugees, it seems that America really concerns about life of Vietnamese refugees. By glance, it looks like America truly wants to save South Vietnamese citizens.

However, through implied author it can be understood that the help is only a camouflage for America's real intention. They need to disguise their hidden interest by constructing their good image. This condition is pictured by following sentence, "*its higher grade of amenities evidence that we were already profiting from the upward mobility of the American Dream*". Based on that statement, it can be said that this country does not truly want to help. The country seems to sale their "American Dreams" to Vietnamese. They just eager to be seen as the supreme nation that is competent to deal with each conflicted country. As a result, America intentionally facilitates those refugees with camps. It is merely their tactic to inform the world of their generosity . In other words, it is their way to promote themselves as a friend of developing countries. This scheme is designed to show the world that America is a perfect place to seek a help. Besides, they want to be seen as the world sympathizer.

Another policy is by supporting military equipment for South Vietnamese soldiers. This policy is to maintain the security of South Vietnam country. By glance, America really protects these countries. In fact, it is their tactic to promote their high technology weapon. The following quotation supports this argument:

"If those thousands still lived, they would not have believed how they had died, just as we could not believe that the Americans—our friends, our benefactors, our protectors—had spurned our request to send more money. And what would we have done with that money? Buy the ammunition, gas, and spare parts for the weapons, planes, and tanks the same Americans had bestowed on us for free. Having given us the needles, they now perversely no longer supplied the dope. (Nothing, the General muttered, is ever so expensive as what is offered for free.)" (p. 4-5)

The quotation above shows that America intentionally finances South Vietnamese government during the War. They look like they mean to free South Vietnam from the communist threat. It can be seen from the way they provide the basic needs of South Vietnam like loan and military equipment. This condition is pictured in the following sentence, "*the Americans—our friends, our benefactors, our protectors—had spurned our request to send more money.*" The text says that America generously finance South Vietnamese government. On contrary, from implied author it can be examined that this is their scheme to tie South Vietnam under their control.

After getting the loan from America, South Vietnam government uses the money to afford American military equipment like guns, planes, ammunition and

many more. In another words, America trickily makes Vietnam as their market and their exhibition place for their military equipment. These sentences depict this idea, *“And what would we have done with that money? Buy the ammunition, gas, and spare parts for the weapons, planes, and tanks the same Americans had bestowed on us for free.”* This statement emphasises American devious tactic in gaining more profit by introducing their military products such as guns and ammunitions. By pretending to assist South Vietnam to win the war over communist they use this moment to display their military products. They convince South Vietnamese government to purchase their military product with the promise of victory. Moreover, by utilising the war, they persuade other underdeveloped country near Vietnam to trust America as the supplier of their military equipment.

Briefly, America applies its policy to smoothen their way to make Vietnam as their media. The implied author contributes in revealing the issue of Vietnam as a potential media. From the narrator statements, it can be understood that America uses Vietnam as their media of promotion and also as their market. They utilises the war as their gate. They hide their real intention beyond their help. As the result Vietnam will always depend on America. This fact depicts American devious tactic to make Vietnam as their media.

2. Economic Aspect

Not only policy, America also utilises economy as another tactic to make Vietnam as their media. America needs Vietnam as one of their income sources. To achieve this goal, America needs to dominate Vietnam discreetly.

They interpose by donating some money to support the life of Vietnamese citizens. This donation is given in form of US Dollar currency. In fact, the value of this American dollar is higher than their used currency. The following text pictures this argument:

“The Dollar Bill might buy a ham sandwich in America, but in a Thai refugee camp the modest green Dollar Bill transformed into colorful Baht, ready to feed a fighting man for days. For a little more Baht, our fighting man could be clothed with the latest in olive drab. Thus, in the name of helping refugees, these donations met the basic necessities of food and garb for the secret army, consisting, after all, of refugees. As for guns and ammunition, they were supplied by the Thai security forces, who in turn received their pocket money from Uncle Sam, carried out with complete

transparency and full congressional approval. (p.149)”

Explicitly, the text visualizes that the Vietnamese people are provoked to accept American donation. The great value of American dollar attracts Vietnamese citizen. With this amount of money, they do not only fulfil their primary needs but also they can conduct their war. It is clearly seen from the sentence, “.....*the modest green Dollar Bill transformed into colorful Baht, ready to feed a fighting man for days.*” This sentence depicts that the donation given by America is use not only to support the life of the citizen but also to finance their battle.

Moreover, Vietnam citizens do not aware that this American donation is conditional. They do believe that America cares about their conflicts. Even, Vietnamese citizens believe that American donation offers them the solution. The following sentence pictures this idea, “*Thus, in the name of helping refugees, these donations met the basic necessities of food and garb for the secret army, consisting, after all, of refugees.*” Through implied author, it can be understood that America shows to the world that they are the only saviour of country with conflict. They promise to end the Vietnam War. In contrast, by giving the loan, America directs Vietnam government to keep the war. As a consequence, the South Vietnamese government tends to depend on this American loan. Through implied author, it can be implied that America slowly place South Vietnam tangled with debt.

American second devious strategy is dominating South Vietnam’s market. This market domination can be seen from the rapid flourish of American products such as military, and entertainment in Vietnam. Since Vietnam is at time of the war they obviously need military equipment. Ironically, Vietnam purchase the military equipment to America. The following sentence supports this argument:

After the marines came the affectless lieutenant and the grizzled captain, who could not bring themselves to carry the enemy’s AK-47 and instead toted the M16. Behind them was the skinny RTO, grease gun in hand and PRC-25 radio on his back. Next was the philosophical medic, M3 medical kit hanging from one shoulder and M14 from the other, as no man on this reconnaissance could go unarmed.....
Then came the hefty machine gunner, M60 in his arms, with myself and Bon next, me with an Ak-47, Bon with the M16. Bringing up the rear was the darkest marine, his weapon the B-40 rocket launcher. (p.170)

.....
“Southeast Asia is awash in heavy
weaponry.” (p.285)

Through implied author it can be analysed that this Vietnam War is utilised as a parade of American military equipment. This war is the exhibition media to show up the advanced of American military products. It is proved from the various advance guns used by Vietnamese soldiers, for example “M16, RTO, PRC-25, M3 medical kit, M14, M60, B-40.” Implicitly, America states that they are capable in fulfilling military needs of South Vietnam. America convinces South Vietnamese government to arm their soldiers with American weaponry.

Moreover, America intends to make Southeast Asia as their potential market. This statement supports the argument, “*Southeast Asia is awash in heavy weaponry.*” This statement explains that America is successfully trading their heavy weaponry into Southeast Asia market. It can be said that all military products sold in Southeast Asia are imported by America. They intentionally make Southeast Asia as their loyal customer.

Another American sly strategy in economic aspect is by providing Vietnamese citizens with numerous job fields. This is done to show the citizens that America care about their welfare. The following statement describes this idea:

The truth, in this case, was that at least a million people were working or had worked for the Americans in one capacity or another, from shining their shoes to running the army designed by the Americans in their own image to performing fellatio on them for the price, in Peoria or Poughkeepsie, of a hamburger. A good portion of these people believed that if the communists won—which they refused to believe would happen—what awaited them was prison or a garrotte, and, for the virgins, forced marriage with the barbarians. Why wouldn't they? These were the rumours the CIA was propagating. (p.10)

It implies that America uses black campaign to propagate South Vietnamese citizens with negative rumours about communist. This is done to make Vietnamese people easier to control. As the result, South Vietnamese citizens willingly work for America since they believe that America is the only one who can help them. The sentence, “*The truth, in this case, was that at least a million people were working or had worked for the Americans....*” shows that Vietnamese people are induced with the amount of money they might get since their payment is in dollar. This fact shows that Vietnamese citizens' perception is set to think American dollar is the most valuable money. As the result,

Vietnamese citizens prefer working for America than their own country. America in this case, becomes the one who benefited the most. They can get numbers of workers with low price.

Ironically, most of Vietnamese people work as American server. The sentence “.....in one capacity or another, from shining their shoes to running the army designed by the Americans in their own image to performing fellatio on them for the price, in Peoria or Poughkeepsie, of a hamburger.” proves that the citizen of South Vietnam mostly occupied as low income job. Some of the citizen works as the waiter in American franchise. Meanwhile, some other volunteer to be soldier which work under American command. All of them are payless. Even worse, the money they earn is used to buy American products. For instance, they go to the cinema to watch American film. They listen to American music. They love American commodity than their own product.

Briefly, by Interfering South Vietnamese economy America is successfully make Vietnam as their media. They harness Vietnam as their display window. They claim Vietnam as their belonging by making Vietnam as world tourism destination. Trickily they hide beyond the notion of bringing Vietnam to prosperity. Moreover, they even make Vietnam depend on their support by lending them money. In fact, Vietnam drowns with debt.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The issue Vietnam as a potential media can be revealed in a novel written by Viet Thanh Nguyen *The Sympathizer* (2016). Implied author contributes in uncovering the meaning beyond the novel. Text- based and context-based also plays the crucial role in discovering the issue Vietnam as a potential media. This analysis also deals with the neo-colonialism concept by Kwame Nkrumah and hegemony by Gramsci. Vietnam as a potential media in this analysis refers to American way to inform, promote and persuade developing country about their products. Through implied author it can be examined that America applies their policy as the tactic to use Vietnam as their promoting media. They also interfere South Vietnam economy as an attempt to have sustainable economic sources.

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