

Nota Penyelidikan/Research Note

An Exploratory Study of Noteworthy Online Versions of Anglo-American Intellectual “Journals of Opinion”

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ABSTRAK

Antara saluran penting untuk mengadakan wacana intelektual dan pertukaran idea secara serius, selain melalui perbincangan dalam seminar, pembentangan kertas kerja, jurnal akademik dan buku keserjanaan ialah “journal of opinion”. Bahkan, jurnal ini mungkin mempunyai impak yang lebih besar terhadap masyarakat berbanding saluran lain. Dengan munculnya World Wide Web (lazimnya digelar “Internet”) kebanyakan “journals of opinion” ini telah menyediakan versi elektronik atas-talian dan dengan itu, semakin meningkatkan capaian pihak awam kepada idea-idea intelektual. Dalam nota penyelidikan ini penulis mengemukakan hasil kajian awal mengenai versi atas-talian “journals of opinion” yang dihasilkan oleh golongan intelektual Amerika dan Inggeris dan yang telah membenarkan sama ada capaian sepenuhnya atau terhad kepada mereka yang tidak melanggan secara membayar yuran. Tujuan utama ialah untuk menarik perhatian para intelektual dan saintis sosial Malaysia dan juga Asia Tenggara kepadanya. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bilangan jurnal tersebut yang terdapat dalam bentuk format elektronik melalui World Wide Web (atau “Internet”) ialah 36 dengan sebahagian besar daripadanya membenarkan capaian penuh kepada bukan yang melanggan. Harus ambil perhatian bahawa di Malaysia bilangan kumpulan pemikir (think tank) semakin meningkat, tetapi “journals of opinion” Malaysia adalah amat berkurangan sekali. Sekiranya para saintis sosial Malaysia berhasrat mempengaruhi arah tuju dasar awam negara ini, maka banyak yang boleh dipelajari daripada pengalaman golongan intelektual awam di United Kingdom dan di Amerika Syarikat.

ABSTRACT

One of the most important avenues for serious intellectual discourse and presentation and exchange of ideas beside seminar presentations, conference papers, formal academic journals and scholarly books is the intellectual “journal of opinion”. In fact, the journal of opinion may actually have a greater impact on society than the other mode. With the appearance of the World Wide Web (commonly called the “Internet”), most intellectual journals of opinion

have also developed electronic, on-line versions thus increasing public accessibility to intellectual ideas even more. In this research note, the writer presents the results of an exploratory study of online versions of Anglo-American intellectual journals of opinion that provide either full access or limited access to people who are not fee-paying subscribers. The main aim is to bring these journals of opinion to the attention of Malaysian and other South-east Asian social scientists and intellectuals. The findings show that the number of Anglo-American intellectual journals of opinion available in electronic format through the World Wide Web (or "Internet") is 36 and the majority of these allow full access to non-payers. In Malaysia, it should be noted that think tanks are growing in number but intellectual journals of opinion are few and far between. If Malaysian social scientists wish to influence the direction of public policy in our country, we can learn valuable lessons from the experience of public intellectuals in the United Kingdom and United States.

INTRODUCTION

Beside seminar presentations, conference papers, formal academic journals and scholarly books, there are other avenues for serious intellectual discourse and presentation and exchange of ideas. One of the most important is the intellectual "journal of opinion" (Blake 1995). In fact, the journal of opinion may actually have a greater impact on society than the other modes of intellectual discourse because it is more accessible to politicians and policy-makers, mass media personalities and other shapers of public opinion (including charismatic religious leaders), and the intelligent laypersons. This is because articles published in such journals serve to convey important ideas through the use of ordinary language rather than in the specialised language and narrow approaches of academia (Coser 1970).

Here is an example to illustrate the writer's point. One of the most influential articles to be published in an intellectual journal of opinion in recent years is Samuel Huntington's controversial article on the "clash of civilizations" which first appeared in the American periodical called *Foreign Affairs* (Huntington 1993). Whatever one may feel about the validity of Huntington's thesis, there is no denying that it has had a big impact on the thinking of many people (including George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden?). *Foreign Affairs* is an intellectual journal of opinion which is highly influential among foreign policy-makers in the United States.

With the appearance of the World Wide Web (commonly called the "Internet"), most intellectual journals of opinion have also developed electronic, online versions. These online versions have increased public accessibility to intellectual ideas even more. This is especially true of online journals of opinion which are completely free and which allow full access to all the articles that

appear in the conventional printed version. (There are also other online journals of opinion that only provide limited access to members of the public who are not fee-paying subscribers).

NOTEWORTHY ELECTRONIC VERSIONS OF ANGLO-AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL "JOURNALS OF OPINION"

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS EXPLORATORY STUDY

In this research note, the writer presents the results of an exploratory study of online versions of Anglo-American intellectual journals of opinion that provide either full access or limited access to people who are not fee-paying subscribers. The main aim is to bring these (sometimes obscure) journals of opinion to the attention of Malaysian and other Southeast Asian social scientists and intellectuals. They are a rich goldmine of ideas and informed opinions and certainly worth being acquainted with. These journals have been classified into three broad ideological categories, that is "progressive", "middle of the road" and "conservative". The terms "progressive" and "conservative" are used in the American sense, that is progressive refers to opinions which have been influenced by socialist or social democratic thought, and conservative refers to opinions which have been influenced by libertarian thought or free market ideology. In terms of access to non-payers, they have been classified as either of "Full" access or "Limited" access.

The methodology used to gather this list of online journals is as follows: The writer visited the websites of major British and American social science associations and investigated their recommended links. Visits to the websites of think tanks and intellectual societies of various ideological orientations (such as the neo-conservative National Association of Scholars from the U.S.A.) and their links were also made. The following are the results of the compilation of noteworthy websites:

The number of Anglo-American intellectual journals of opinion available in electronic format through the World Wide Web (or "Internet") identified above is 36. Of these, 12 can be classified as "progressive", 12 are "middle of the road" and 12 are "conservative". The majority of these allow full access to non-payers. This is a boon to social scientists in this region since we are often strongly influenced (for good or for ill) by ideas emanating from countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States and it is very helpful to follow contemporary intellectual and ideological debates in these two Western nations.

There is increasing recognition in the United States that ideas do have great social consequences. Therefore, conservatives in the United States have successfully established a network of foundations, think tanks, intellectual societies, etc. to promote their ideas (Phua 2001). In fact, American conservatives appear to be doing better than their ideological opponents in the War of Ideas,

TABLE 1. Online Anglo-American intellectual journals of opinion

Name of "Journal of Opinion"	Ideological Orientation	Non-Payer Access	Website
American Enterprise	Conservative	Limited	www.theamericanenterprise.org/index1.htm
American Outlook	Conservative	Full	www.americanoutlook.org/
American Prospect	Progressive	Full	www.prospect.org
American Spectator	Conservative	Limited	www.spectator.org/
Atlantic Monthly	Middle of the road	Limited	www.theatlantic.com
Boston Review	Middle of the road	Full	http://bostonreview.net
Brookings Review	Middle of the road	Full	www.brookings.org/press/review/rev_des.htm
Chronicle of Higher Education	Middle of the road	Limited	http://chronicle.com/al/
City Journal	Conservative	Full	www.city-journal.org/
Commentary	Conservative	Limited	www.commentarymagazine.com/
Dissent	Progressive	Full	www.dissentmagazine.org/
Foreign Affairs	Middle of the road	Limited	www.foreignaffairs.org
Foreign Policy	Middle of the road	Limited	www.foreignpolicy.com
In These Times	Progressive	Limited	www.inthesetimes.com
London Review of Books	Middle of the road	Limited	www.lrb.co.uk/
Monthly Review	Progressive	Limited	www.monthlyreview.org/
Mother Jones	Progressive	Full	www.mojones.com
Ms Magazine	Progressive	Limited	www.ms magazine.com
The Nation	Progressive	Full	www.thenation.com

continue

TABLE 1. continue

Name of "Journal of Opinion"	Ideological Orientation	Non-Payer Access	Website
National Review	Conservative	Full	www.nationalreview.com
New Internationalist	Progressive	Limited	www.newint.org/
New Left Review	Progressive	Limited	www.newleftreview.net/
New Republic	Conservative	Limited	www.tnr.com
New York Review of Books	Middle of the road	Limited	www.nybooks.com
New York Times Magazine	Middle of the road	Full	www.nytimes.com/pages/magazine/index.html
Policy Review	Conservative	Full	www.policyreview.org
The Progressive	Progressive	Full	www.progressive.org
Prospect	Middle of the road	Limited	www.prospect-magazine.co.uk
The Public Interest	Conservative	Full	www.thepublicinterest.com
Reason	Conservative	Full	www.reason.com
The Spectator	Conservative	Full	www.spectator.co.uk
Tikkun	Progressive	Full	www.tikkun.org
Utne Reader	Progressive	Full	www.utne.com
Washington Monthly	Middle of the road	Limited	www.washingtonmonthly.com/
Weekly Standard	Conservative	Full	www.weeklystandard.com/
World Press Review	Middle of the road	Full	www.worldpress.org

e.g., at present, the American Left is weak and liberalism (the American version is a rough equivalent of European social democracy) is on the defensive (George 1997; Stefancic and Delgado 1996). One major reason for the success of American conservatives is their effective use of intellectual journals of opinion such as *Commentary*, *The Public Interest*, and *National Review* in both the printed and electronic versions.

British conservatives have noticed the great success of their counterparts in the United States and therefore have also attempted to establish conservative think tanks and journals of opinion. In Malaysia, it should be noted that think tanks are growing in number but intellectual journals of opinion are few and far between. If Malaysian social scientists wish to influence the direction of public policy in our country, we can learn valuable lessons from the experience of public intellectuals in the United Kingdom and United States indeed.

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