

Nov 04, 2016 by *Alvin Snyder*

The Growing Impact of the Fox News Channel as Purveyor of U.S. Public Diplomacy ^[1]

The Fox News Channel, buoyed by its new huge audience ratings and profits, is expanding its influence as a credible source for news and articulator of U.S. public diplomacy, through huge viewership on its coverage of the Israel-Hezbollah war.

A new study by the Pew Research Center finds that Fox News Channel is one of the few media "sources that has not suffered a credibility decline in recent years.... There has been a 13-percentage point drop in views of CNN's credibility among Democrats in the past two years, significantly shrinking the difference in opinion across party lines."

According to Kagan Research, Fox has increased its spending by 20%, and the 2006 Annual Report on the News Media by the Project for Excellence in Journalism says Fox is gaining on CNN as the biggest cable news profit center, with MSNBC lagging behind.

There are many who perceive the Fox News Channel as being highly partisan, even a mouthpiece for the Bush administration, although its Washington bureau chief, Brit Hume, says wryly on his nightly news broadcast that Fox is "fair, balanced, and unafraid." Be that as it may, the FNC's coverage of the Middle East war has left its competition far behind in the audience ratings and in a quandary, and blogs on the left are uncharacteristically subdued.

The latest TV viewer ratings published by Mediaweek show Fox not only way out front in the talk news category, but also as one of most viewed cable TV channels overall, including the big entertainment and movie outlets. The FNC ranked immediately behind the entertainment giants Disney, the USA Network, and Turner Broadcasting. (Some may wish to note that Fox, in fourth place overall, also bested the Cartoon Network, just one slot behind Fox in the audience rankings).

On a typical day, Tuesday, July 25, TVnewser.com lists FNC's Sheppard Smith (reporting from Israel-Lebanon) at 7:00 p.m. comfortably ahead of CNN's Wolf Blitzer (also reporting from Israel-Lebanon), and with more than three times the number of total viewers for "Hardball" with Chris Matthews, an outspoken critic of President George W. Bush, on MSNBC. At 8:00 p.m., FNC's Bill O'Reilly has left the continuation of the Chris Matthews show in the dust, with O'Reilly's 2,472,000 viewers compared to Matthews' 383,000 total viewers.

To help bolster Chris Matthews' ratings, NBC is cross-promoting his "Hardball" program by placing Matthews in interviews recently on "Imus in the Morning" on MSNBC, and on NBC's Tonight Show.

Over at Fox, Sean Hannity (of "Hannity and Colmes") leads MSNBC's Joe Scarborough in the 9:00 p.m. slot with over five times more viewers, while CNN has taken to programming

Freedom Concerts to raise educational funds for children of military killed in action.

On the Web, bloggers on the left have been strangely quiet, but not so on the right. Fox's Bill O'Reilly has editorialized that Israel was right to go after Hezbollah, but that liberals are reluctant to praise President George Bush's support for Israeli military action, and Israel's willingness to prolong the conflict until they finish the job.

This became apparent by the lack of chatter on liberal blogs following recent Israel solidarity rallies in New York, Washington and Los Angeles, where several speakers, such as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel and California's Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger lauded President Bush's support for Israel. On the right, however, a blogger in attendance wrote "In the boiling heat, the young, old, Jewish, Christians, chanted their support for Israel. It was gorgeous." Other blogs noted pro-Bush feelings in crowds, but blogs on the left were not to be heard.

J.J. Goldberg, Editor of Forward of New York, America's oldest Jewish newspaper, told National Public Radio that the left has chosen to be quiet on the subject of Israel's battle with Hezbollah, including blogs.

"On the right," said Goldberg, "the bloggers are going on and on about those horrible Muslims, the horrible Arabs, and on the left, there's been an unwillingness to get into it. You don't want to get into the sort of invective you're going to get from your readers, whichever side you take."

All this seems to be showing up in TV talk show ratings where Fox dominates, now with newfound credibility, and where Bush administration foreign policies are explored in depth.
