

## **FILTERING PROPAGANDA MEDIA: THE CHOMSKIAN ANALYSIS**

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Edward Bernays, the leading figure of creel commission (a U.S. govt, propaganda commission) recommends to "regiment the public mind every bit as much as an army regiments their bodies. Propaganda is the name of this regimentation which is carried out by 'responsible minority' for the benefit of ignorant meddling or outsiders." Chomsky (2003) contests Harold Lasswell's remark that- 'Democratic dogmatism about men being the best judges of their own interests should not be believed, propaganda became the more sophisticated new technique of control' of the general public.'

The exclusivity of rational thinking thus paves the way for the monopoly of chosen few, enlightened few and privileged few containing and constricting alternate thinking, alternatives, counter-views and opinion rewriting their own narrative using its own peculiar and imposing vocabulary. In the propaganda ecosystem, nobody is then left capable of questioning minority at the top of the power hierarchy defined by socio-cultural locations and monetary assets. The 'others' become non-consequential, latent, passive, ready-to-be-ruled.

Chomsky says that 'the point of public relations slogans like'" "support our troops" is that they don't mean anything. They mean as much as whether you support the people in Iowa. Of course, there was an issue. The issue was, do you support our policy? But you don't want people to think about that issue. That is the whole point of propaganda. You want to create a slogan that nobody is going to be against, and everybody's going to be for" (Chomsky, 1997). So, thinking is the prized-catch for propagandists, which they kill first of all to make herd receptive of what they are going to say.

Chomsky also writes about corporate steps, which "rely more on thought control." Scientific methods of 'strike-breaking" and "human relations", campaigns to mobilize the public against "outsiders" preaching "communism and anarchy" and seeking to disrupt the communities of sober working men and farmers, housewives tending to their families, hard-working executives toiling day and night to serve the people..." (Chomsky, 2000). Chomsky sees propaganda built on a false premise that serves interest of political and social elites in Democracy. Propaganda has acquired many dimensions in the times of globalised and media dominated world. The propaganda filters by Chomsky remains an intelligent and incise intervention towards decoding media and propaganda and hence propaganda filters.

Propaganda filters: Manufacturing consent

Chomsky proposed a propaganda model with five filters. He says the media merely "mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the stage and private activity, and their choices, emphases, and omissions can after be understood best... by analyzing them in such terms." (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

The propaganda model has news filters at its axis. These news filters sieve out anything undesirable where those who control media again define undesirability. The first filter is the money. The industrialization in the 19th century dramatically increased the efficiency of press which resulted in increased readership due to increased circulation. Also, the cost of operating and owning the then press rose from under a thousand pound to 50,000 pounds in 1867 in Britain. It was two million pounds in 1918. In such a scenario, it became an industry with a heavy investment with all the economic principles applicable to it which more true for any business enterprise.

In U.S.A., Chomsky writes, there is rule of media giants who actually are large profit seeking corporations, owned and controlled by wealthy people: "Media stocks have become market favourites, and actual or prospective owners of newspapers and television properties have found it possible to capitalize increased audience size and advertising revenues into multiplied values of the media franchises and great wealth." He contends further that media has become an economic and business venture. It becomes more likely that anything which can cut into the profits of media corporations would become undesirable for them. Secondly, common people, or mass can't think of getting into the

‘business with rocketing investments. They will then have to depend upon ‘other’ media, which is business media propelled by the monetary interests. With the growing concentration in the ownership of media houses there is emerging a core group of elites, which Ben Bagdikian calls as “a new private ministry of information and culture that can set national agenda.”

Chomsky says that media thrive on the advertising revenue, which forms the second filter of his propaganda model. The advertising made media an interface, a platform that the advertisers can use to interact with the prospective buyers. So, advertisers favoured those particular media which had not only a great number of viewership or readership but also who are flexible and obliging. Also, the ad-based media, to quote Chomsky, receive an advertising subsidy that gives them a price-marketing-quality edge, which allows them to encroach on and further weaken their ad-free (or ad-disadvantaged) rivals. Even if ad-based media cater to an affluent (“Upscale”) audience, they easily pick up a large part of the “downscale” audience, and their rivals loose market share and are eventually driven out or marginalized.” This scramble for audience has resulted in a strange but obvious effect. Mass or the public have become a product is to be sold in the advertising camp. Media companies ‘auction’ them to the advertisers on a price which is determined by the Neilson or other ratings .

Challenging the authenticity of the information source provides an insight into the politics that maybe involved. This source is the third filter which examines all the processes involved in making news. Since it’s not possible to post a reporter to every significant place, it is a convenience that a news can be bought from News agencies. And well, “these news agencies work like a business institution and are also influenced by their various socio-political, religious and economic affiliations which might alter the structure of news. Similarly, many government agencies are to be viewed from this angle. David Cogswell puts it in these words - “Government bureaucracies cater to the needs of news organizations, creating symbiotic relationships by making the work of gathering news easier, less expensive government sanctioned, and corporate blessed.” This explains the governments impatience and eagerness to give rather inject information’s in the media system so copiously. Chomsky provides statistics regarding this concern - The U.S. Air force revealed that its public information outreach included the following: 140 newspapers, 6,90000 copies per week Airman Magazine, monthly circulation 1,25,000, 34 radio and 17 TV stations, primarily overseas 45000 headquarters and unit news conferences, 500 media orientation flights 50 meetings with editorial boards, 4000 speeches. This is only the tip of an iceberg as this is a part of govt, machinery. So, the news source might use lucrative offers, benefits or intimidation to make its ‘homework’ as news in the media.

The fourth filter is flak. The word means negative reactions to media in any form as phone calls, letters lawsuits, speeches and other forms of punitive action. At first instance, it may seem it is a correctional measure but in reality it might not be so. For example, in the 70s and ‘80s institutions like American Legal Foundation, the Capital Legal foundation, the center for media and public affairs, and Accuracy in Media (AIM) came into being. Well, these are definitely flak producing entities so as to correct the media. Now, the whole problem is the point of view of correction. These may deliberately miss the opportunity to chide media on issues that they are comfortable with. Chomsky comments on it with reference to AIM - The function of AIM is to harass the media and put pressure on them to follow the corporate agenda and a hard line, right wing foreign policy. It presses the media to join more enthusiastically in Red-scare bandwagons, and attacks them for alleged deficiencies whenever they fail to toe the line on foreign policy. It conditions the media to expect trouble (and cost increases) for violating right-wing standards of bias” (1988). Media although give space to all these flaks by letting them to be public but ultimately, succumbs to the wishes of authority or power. Thus, flak controls the content of the media to a great extent and nudges it to a corner if it is not comfortable with the power. So, ‘the producer of flak add to one another’s strength and reinforce the command of political authority...” to quote Chomsky.

The last filter of the propaganda model is anti-communism. During the cold war period, USA became so obsessed with Russia and its communism that it treated Russia like ghost. Any hint of endorsement of communism even remotely was a crime in the western media. The media was a part of dedicated workforce ‘fighting’ the ‘evil of communism’. The anti-communist control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media. In normal times as well as in periods of Red scares, issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of communist and anti-communist powers, with gains and losses allocated to contesting sides, and rooting for “our side” considered an entirely legitimate news practice... the ideology and religion of anticommunism is a potent filter - Chomsky says. But since the fall of U.S.S.R. in 1988, there was no potent enemy. So, there was need to create one. And it was created in the form of Saddam Hussain who was earlier pampered and supported by U.S.A. earlier.

The short-lived animosity gave way to Iraq's destruction. Then Afghanistan was invented. With that, there is a new enemy. Entire Muslim religion and oriental civilization. This is the new found obsession of U.S.A.

#### Conclusion:

There is no doubt that with the media playing more and more crucial role in our lives, it has emerged as an instrument of power exertion. Since, the days of coercion in the vocabulary of rule and administration are bygone with the coming of Democratic setup in most of the countries, there has to be way out. And that novel way was persuasion science or propaganda which was pioneered by U.S.A. and a new theory of propaganda was evolved based on Machiavellian principles as Woodrow Wilson established Creel Commission which was a sort of propaganda ministry. Chomsky sees through this game of persuasion and provides us an enlightening insight. Manufacturing consent seems to be a more one-sided, authoritative, imposing, arrogant attempt to influence or slant common opinion effectively eliminating any possibility of collective wisdom and decision making. This is 'well supported' by the leading theologian Reinhold Niebuhr - "Rationality is a very narrowly restricted skill. Most people are guided by just emotion and impulse. Those of us who have rationality have to create "necessary illusions" and "emotionally potent oversimplifications" to keep the naive simpletons more or less on course"

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