

Free essay on the propaganda model: case of edward snowden

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An excerpt from the main book *Manufacturing Consent* (Pantheon, 1988) indicates a recognition of the functions of the mass media to communicate messages and assist familiarize the populace with values and beliefs that will help integrate them into the society at large. This role, as pointed out in this excerpt, is not possible without 'systemic propaganda'. Media is controlled monopolistically and censored for being politically incorrect whenever their reports are not in sync with the positions held by the elite, who are strategically positioned to decide how the society operates.

In an interview with various interviewers in 1992, Noah Chomsky painted a picture of a mainstream media that diverts the mind of the public away from the issues that matter in an 'indoctrination system'. For instance, Sports, he says, gives people something to 'be attentive to that which is not important'. While describing fanaticism as a training program in 'irrational jingoism', Chomsky connects the energy devoted to sports (cheering and supporting) to the media giving a platform to advertisers to reach out to the public (Chomsky. Info, 1992).

One open illustration is the Edwin Snowden case where he blew the whistle on the American NSA and the British intelligence on invasion of private citizens' privacy by method of tapping phones and screening emails accounts of their citizens and beyond their borders. This scandal drew immense and intense debates, most of which were in the mainstream media.

Most astounding is the behavior of the public at large. Such news would be expected to elicit emotion among the citizenry (in countries that enjoy the democracy purported to exist in these countries) to levels where

accountability would be demanded and responsibility taken. But in a funny twist, this story seems to be fizzling, and so far no arrests have been made in connection with the unconstitutional act.

‘ Guardian journalists could face criminal charges over Edward Snowden leaks’ Article by David Barret, The Telegraph, Tuesday 10 December 2013. In the article, the columnist says:

‘ John Kerry: World leaders have been understanding about NSA leaks’ Article by P. Maynard and N. Hopkins, The Guardian, Friday 15 November 2013. In this article it is indicated that the British National Assembly even called it treason.

‘ House bill seeks to stem classified leaks’ Article by Ken Dilanian, The Los Angeles Times, November 21 2013.

The words opted for by the mainstream media to describe Mr. Snowden after the saga leaves a lot to be desired. Words such as ‘ Fugitive NSA leaker’.

This tilts the mind and changes the opinion of a reader into thinking that Mr. Snowden went into hiding for committing a serious crime, and he is now on the run, something mostly associated with guilt.

Noah Chomsky said any totalitarian ruler would admire the way the American media is obedient and uniform. The propaganda model intends to explain how the media behaves by examining the pressures that are a constraint and have an influence on the content of news in a system where profit drives everything. The propaganda model shows that the news that is received by the public is filtered and shaped in order to be newsworthy, and this prioritizes the news and determines the amount of coverage they are accorded (Chomsky, 1988).

In an era where the mainstream media houses in the US and the UK are more concerned with profitability, it has become increasingly difficult to operate without activities that generate income such as advertising. Most media houses rely heavily on advertising to stay afloat, and it creates the bulk of the revenue they receive. With this in mind, production of news that antagonizes advertisers goes against the interests of a particular media house.

The elite has found ways of tampering with the news outcome. From their vast resources, they have taken a lot of advantage of the hunger by the media for cheap news content. In Mr. Snowden's case, the public was alarmed at the revelations by Mr. Snowden. This did not make the elite very happy, as they had interests which were now being debated upon in the public for a in their countries, exposing their operations. The mainstream media depicts the few preferred and 'relevant' individuals as unbiased and credible sources of information.

The media's ability to report authoritatively has been compromised greatly by flak, which is a means of instilling discipline in the media. There are negative commentaries highlighted against particular journalists and media organizations that stray outside the agenda. Flak includes lawsuits, complaints and sanctions. This has worked to tame the media. The British government has already begun court proceedings against journalists from The Guardian who published Edward Snowden's story. The public is being marshalled against a 'common enemy', while the state agencies continue grappling with a convincing explanation to give to the public on the allegations by Edward Snowden.

As things stand, Mr. Snowden has been branded a terrorist, and he brought this out in an interview with The Guardian by saying ' They will say I aided the enemy'. He has been demonized by the media and depicted as being insufficiently patriotic, as he has assisted in compromising national security. The amount of coverage that this story got was vast enough to start a huge public debate, but the main issues have not been solved. The attention of the general public has been diverted from what really matters to the more trivial matters of the story as indicated by the headlines in the news. Considering the fact that almost 80% of the public relies on the media for information in order to make critical decisions, it has become a fact that doctored editorial content works, as the society continues to focus on side issues. The public in this case, however, while not entirely convinced by reasons given by their governments on why their phones are being tapped, has not reacted in a manner likely to change the present situation of their privacy. Such dissent is not worthy of front page news.

Work Cited

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