



Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media

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An absolutely brilliant analysis of the ways in which individuals and organizations of the media are influenced to shape the social agendas of knowledge and, therefore, belief. Contrary to the popular conception of members of the press as hard-bitten realists doggedly pursuing unpopular truths, Herman and Chomsky prove conclusively that the free-market economics model of media leads inevitably to normative and narrow reporting. Whether or not you've seen the eye-opening movie, buy this book, and you will be a far more knowledgeable person and much less prone to having your beliefs manipulated as easily as the press.

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Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media Details

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From Reader Review Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media for online ebook

Glesnertod says

I first added this to my 'books to read' list after watching the movie, "Good Will Hunting". I was not disappointed. This book is one of the best, if not the the most well written book I've read. I don't mean to say that the information was so life-altering that I will never be the same. But first and simply, that their sentence structure and flow of thought is clear, engaging and pieced together masterfully. They sift through a lot of information, wading through fact and fabrication that they seem to slip into place without effort. Not only does this represent their bank of information on the three case studies (among others), it shows that they can place that information relevantly and do so in a way that is atmospherically readable. (highly readable, sorry about that). I enjoy a lot of books. I enjoy them for a lot of reasons. With Manufacturing Consent, I enjoyed reading this book for the joy of how it was written. The content was challenging too.

What they share does bring alterations to the table. You will not be able to sit back and watch the 6 O'Clock news the same way again. But, due to this book and others like it, you probably already don't. I suspect, from my own upbringing and experience, that many do not trust the media. The media (see book for who this is, "mass") has sold their soul to two-face, the devil and love, (of money). It is sickening to know now more of the truth to the three case studies shared. And to suspect that this is happening even today. Really, as I write my stomach weakens. We need these stories told. We need to tell them.

Emma Sea says

A very thorough, comprehensive account of how "media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them."

The weak point of the book is that the examples discussed are so old (Laos, Cambodia, Nicaragua, etc) that I doubt the book will be accessible to Gen Y or younger. The 2002 edition I read has a new introduction with more recent discussions, but I think the book needs a complete new edition.

Although it's from a pre-internet world it is even more relevant now.

Because I don't watch TV I didn't realise how poor the actual reporting had become in NZ until the Kim Dotcom case. Not one mainstream media organisation contextualized the case in any way: the general public opinion therefore was that "If the FBI want him he **must** be a bad guy and the NZ government is entitled to break the law, and lie about it, in order to catch bad guys." The Gen Y kids I teach have no knowledge about the issue, and don't care. I feel highly disturbed about that. Sometimes I find myself unexpectedly turning into my grandfather.

Spicy T AKA Mr. Tea says

A superb read on the media and the propaganda machine within our so-called "democratic" or "free" society. Meticulously researched and cited this book gave me mental push-ups for about 6 months while I chugged

through it. Accessible in some areas, daunting in others, this book has a tremendous amount to offer. Not for the faint of heart. If you haven't read Chomsky before, I'd recommend listening to his lectures and/or reading some of his shorter works. I felt smarter and stupider after finishing this book.

Natalie aka Tannat says

Hard to rate. The ideas were great but it was a real slog of a read, so I can't recommend it. Paragraphs like the following were not uncommon:

"Meanwhile, because of the power of establishment sources, the flak machines, and anti-Communist ideology, we would anticipate outcries that the worthy victims are being sorely neglected, that the unworthy are treated with excessive and uncritical generosity, that the media's liberal, adversarial (if not subversive) hostility to government explains our difficulties in mustering support for the latest national venture in counterrevolutionary intervention."

Yes, that was a paragraph, and it was from chapter 1, so it didn't exactly help my experience. I don't even think it's the best example of what bothered me about the writing. If it didn't bother you, you'll be fine. I have issues with any book where I have to reread sentences 3 times just to parse their meaning.

Jeff Menter says

If you can slog through it (not that it's written poorly, it's just that the subjects that are covered have, to most people, the intrinsic appeal of lint analysis) you will be rewarded with a new way to look at the mass media and a new framework with which you can apply your own critical analysis.

Congratulations.

Matthias says

Politicians are like hookers. You can't be one unless you can pretend to like people while you're fucking them.

In summary the propaganda model works like this: Bullshit politician with biased information is seen as an expert. Expert gives bullshit to news organization to inform the public. News organization repeats bullshit with cute voices and opinions. We all become stupid, except Chomsky. He writes this book. You read it. Become depressed and kill yourself.

I don't think I can do a serious review on this book.

rebuked severely (a term called 'flak' is used), and which can't threaten their business performances. Lastly, the fifth filter is used which is the hostility to Communism or Socialism. The notion that America and its allies are intellectually and morally pure, and Communism being a deplorable ideology. The latter being replaced by 'war on terror,' as discoursed by Chomsky in recent years.

Atila Iamarino says

Não estava preparado para este livro gigante. O ponto central é bem importante, mostrar como a mídia serve para passar o conceito que o estado quer apresentar. Retratando uma guerra de maneira parcial, não citando um lado em um debate, tendo dois pesos e duas medidas, etc. O que não esperava é que fossem detalhar tão profundamente cada exemplo citado – Vietnã, troca de governo na Nicarágua e Guatemala, invasão do Camboja, etc.

Estou mais acostumado com livros mais recentes e dinâmicos, que normalmente passam mais tempo explicando conceitos do que descrevendo todos os detalhes. Boa lição, mais detalhes e história do que o necessário.

Michael Finocchiaro says

On the even more intellectual edge of the left, Noam Chomsky has relentlessly fought against the blindness of American foreign policy and how the press manipulates public opinion to endorse and encourage catastrophes such as the Vietnam War (and more recently, the disaster of the two Iraq Wars, the War in Afghanistan, etc.) This book explains how the press (even when it takes a slightly more critical view of events), is still at heart manipulating the truth in service of power. The most recent example was Drumpf's use of misinformation, false news, lies and the press' blind belief in a solid Clinton victory which allowed him to sweep states that Obama had won in 2008 and 2012 and win the electoral college (which naturally he had criticized as useless in 2012). The erudite vision of Chomsky is perhaps hard to stomach for those who wish to guard their blinders but nonetheless, he has been right time after time.

On a side note, last year's Independant film Captain Fantastic does a beautiful and moving (to me anyway) homage to Noam :)

Happy reading!

Pablo Abayian says

Interesantísimo análisis de cómo funciona la prensa estadounidense (y por ende, la prensa hegemónica mundial), explicando desde las víctimas dignas o indignas, o exponiendo la doble moral sobre hechos similares o idénticos, perpetrados por amigos o enemigos del régimen. Cuenta cómo se construyen relatos que llegan a la mayoría de la población como verdades, solamente eligiendo las historias que contar, los énfasis y pequeñas mentiras o falta de investigación que apoyan el relato oficial. A pesar de haber sido escrito a fines de los 80, uno lo podría relacionar con muchos acontecimientos actuales. No le doy 5 porque por momentos se vuelve tedioso con millones de referencias, pero un excelente libro que definitivamente recomiendo

Jim Drewes says

If I'd have just read the first chapter of the book, I would have given it a 3 or 4 star review. But in its entirety, it gets a 2. It is terribly boring, and it isn't the unassailable crown jewel of political literature that so many reviewers make it out to be.

First - take all the 4 and 5 star reviews with a grain of salt. Read them, and ask yourself how much sense it makes. Many of the reviews will comment on how brilliant the book is, but will also note that it was difficult to get through. To me, 5 stars means that the content was good, AND the presentation was good. Certainly there was some thoughtful analysis in this book, but much of the content was presented in an overly wordy form. Unfortunately, I think the language and writing style employed by the authors leads many readers to somehow assign more credibility to the content than is really merited.

Which brings me to my second point - while I don't disagree with the premise of the book, I found some of the analysis to be equally as biased as the media the authors seek to discredit. Chomsky and Herman frequently show their disdain for the right-wing in ways that don't serve to further the point they were making at the time. This kind of sniping struck me as hypocritical.

Finally, I think the approach taken to illustrate media bias was overly deep with regard to the case studies they utilized, and quite sparse in terms of the breadth of case studies. The authors spent over 300 pages describing media bias from just 3 main political news stories from the 50 years preceding the writing of the book. There are far more examples to draw from, and I would have preferred to see a deeper study into the application of the propaganda model across many historic events. Anyone who understands simple supply and demand economics, and has completed even a remedial marketing course can sense the media bias in front of their faces without having to labor through these case studies. A far more interesting study would be to show statistically that the bias exists, and to offer evidence as to what really causes the bias. Very little of the Chomsky/Herman content was dedicated to the "why", past the first chapter.

Arcelia Diaz says

listen, i'm disassociating as i write this and it's likely that i was in a similar state of mind half of the times i picked up this book but i'll wipe my own slate. i admit didn't read the entire book, i got up to the part about the pessimistic coverage of the Tet Offensive, so page 240?

it was a good book, don't get me wrong. this book is absolutely brimming with quotes, real life events, and references. it's thoroughly researched and in the end that's what made me stop reading it. it's so academic and stiff! which is perfectly fine. however there was little context for historical events, even if they served a macro-purpose in shaping the world as we know it. Noam assumes the majority of his readers are well educated in matters of history and that's probably right. if you pick up this book bear in mind that it's incredibly valuable! but you'll need to know your history.

David Cupples says

Brilliant analysis by one of the great scientists of all time. Totally refutes the myth of the "liberal media" and secondly, the myth that this (nonexistent) liberal media is responsible for defeat in the Vietnam War. Clarifies that the war was not a mistake but a crime as defined by the Geneva Conventions (and common decency, I might add). Chomsky has consistently pointed out that in poll after poll the American public is well to the left of the supposed "liberal media." Beware of polls with trick or leading questions. Much more in this classic, indispensable work, but it's been a while since I read. Reviewed by David Dusty Cupples, author of *Stir It Up: The CIA Targets Jamaica, Bob Marley and the Progressive Manley Government* (a novel) *Stir It Up*

Travis says

Smart people wrote this book. I don't say that because it was hard to understand at times (and it was), because that stemmed just from being verbose. I say it took smart people because the amount of data gathered and the analysis to tie to together was quite astounding.

The summary of the book is as follows: The US-media is a controlled information relay system (propaganda). The authors set forth a "propaganda model" that they see being employed in our media for decades. It isn't done in a secret room with a man smoking a cigarette in a dark corner. It is done through a series of very public filters - each filter is named and described. They make sense to me (I agree with the authors).

Most of the filters come from the fact that each media organization is a business and has to be profitable. For instance, FOX, CBS, NBC, etc all have advertisers. Which of those organizations do you think will run a documentary slamming the business practices of GE? None, of course. GE is a HUGE company that would immediately withdraw their commercial support. Another example is the fact that news gathering is expensive. Most news outlets rely on the government and military as news sources. This is often (very often) a conflict of interest. Nevertheless, for the sake of cost, news organizations read those sources as "authoritative" simple for cost. Moreover, negative reporting on the US government's activities abroad will cause their access to "sources" to dry up. There are a few more, but you'll have to pull the book to get them.

It was a so-so book.

Paul DeBusschere says

In *Manufacturing Consent*, Herman and Chomsky present an outdated and flawed thesis asserting government and corporate control over mass media to promote a right-wing agenda, yet still makes some valid points regarding propaganda in the media. By cherry-picking a handful of egregious media missteps related to foreign policy, the authors hope to convince readers of the media's complicity in pushing a right-wing corporate/government agenda to deceive the American public.

One problem with all this stems from the book having been written in the late 1980's and only lightly revised in 2000. Hence, the text does not include the media's eight year vilification of George W. Bush's domestic and foreign policy, and its incessant love affair with Barack Obama's leftist agenda. Thus the perspective the

book offers on the media seems dated, as the three examples given - Central America, Vietnam, the Bulgarian Connection - arise from a different political era. As for media reporting on domestic issues, the book takes a complete pass.

Furthermore, the underlying premise of Herman and Chomsky is one that deserves more critical examination than is given in the book. This is not that media serves to spread propaganda. Rather, the book's underlying assumption is that the media is right-wing in nature because media outlets are owned and controlled by corporations. Although asserted, no proof is given in the text. However, one can easily conclude this is fallacious based on contributions by corporation to both political parties. Corporations are profit driven and there are just as many left-wing corporate heads as there are right-wing, if political contributions are any indicator.

Additionally, the text of Manufacturing Consent has the appearance of a scholarly work, but a careful reading reveals it doesn't measure up. End notes are sporadic, though numerous. There are many assertions of opinion in the text which are not supported in the text or by any end notes. In some instances where an assertion has a note, the note is just another assertion, with no reference. In some other instances, the authors reference unpublished works, which is as good as no reference at all. Apparently, the authors think the readers should simply trust them.

Despite all of this, Herman and Chomsky do make a convincing case. One should be skeptical of the media - just not for the base reasons the authors cite. Coming from as far left as Herman and Chomsky must be, it is not too much of a stretch to understand their warped view of the media as right-wing. Considered from a more inclusive and centrist lens, however, one still can accept the propaganda model they propose, but from a more balanced perspective.

April Hawkins says

I read this entire work from cover to cover. It took me 9 mos. 9 mos. of suffering for this one. I'm not ashamed. I learned a lot, though there were also things that went over my head. It is NOT for the lay person. You need previous knowledge of the people and places he describes. Don't get me wrong, I love Chomsky, I think he's probably the smartest person alive today, but his writing is a headache to read. And I became very discouraged at times and wanted to quit. But I didn't quit, and now here I am.

The book is about how the mass media is manipulated by the government. The government controls the flow of information to the public through use of propaganda to sway media one way or the other. Chomsky uses a propaganda model based on what he calls "worthy" and "unworthy" victims to describe the media's tactics. Worthy victims are worthy of media attention, but unworthy victims can basically piss off and die. The government will give attention to those it favors, those it supports, those it does business with, and if you don't fit that description, nobody cares about you. You are an unworthy victim. The media will absolutely not listen to the stories of unworthy victims. It brushes them off and belittles their existence.

I learned a lot about Vietnam, Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and a guy named Agca who may or may not have been hired by the Bulgarians to off the pope.

I encourage anyone who has an interest in media and government relations to read it, but you must exercise patience, unless you already know something about the aforementioned topics. It's a terrific read and I enjoyed it as much as I hated it. 5 stars for Chomsky.

Nandakishore Varma says

I passed up a chance to buy this book some twenty years ago, and have not been able to locate a copy since. It's a shame, because Chomsky talks about how the so-called "free" press is anything but free: they are bent on fabricating news to manufacture consent among the populace to further their corporate agenda. Chomsky describes how this has been done from the Vietnam war to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This is all the more relevant, as I am physically now witnessing such an exercise. A corporate bookselling entity has taken over an independent website for book reviews. In no time, they are converting it from a meeting point of book-lovers to criticise and discuss books independently, to a marketing portal hosting fawning reviews of any rag they care to publish.

The corporate behemoths, for whom everything is either raw material to be exploited or a product to be consumed, is bent on polluting everything including the field of the intellect. We need people like Chomsky to point out the dangers, lest we become a generation of zombies.

Aaron says

I've been a journalist for 15 years now, and I've often wondered how it is that the mass media in the United States manage to project the image of being defenders of democracy while actually deterring it.

Having just read "Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media," by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, I finally understand as thoroughly as I've always wanted to.

Where to begin ... for starters, have you ever heard of worthy and unworthy victims?

Did you know that the press was far less the watchdog it was praised for being in covering the Watergate scandal?

Remember that Vietnam War "documentary" filmed by an entity called Freedom House that essentially argued the media were responsible for losing the war in Vietnam because they were too negative and anti-government and biased and anti-war? In some circles, that argument still holds weight, having taken root in the American Mind as an almost obvious given. It's total and complete bullshit, as Chomsky and Herman show.

To say the authors are scrupulous in taking on the above issues - and much more - is an understatement. This book is a true work of scholarship, extremely well-researched, heavily foot-noted and filled with ample evidence to back up its central argument that the mass media in the U.S. operate on a foundation of systematic propaganda.

Chomsky and Herman write: "The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda."

The maddening thing about this system is that, unlike a totalitarian state or one in which power is largely concentrated in some monopolistic, bureaucratic form, it is much more difficult to see a propaganda system hard at work where there is no formal censorship and media are largely privately held.

This explains why media compete and sometimes expose corporate or government corruption, and portray themselves, via their own channels of advertising, as looking out for the little guy. But, as Chomsky and Herman write, "What is not evident (and remains undiscussed in the media) is the limited nature of such critiques, as well as the huge inequality in command of resources, and its effect both on access to a private media system and on its behavior and performance."

A propaganda model, the authors argue, focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and "its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public."

The essential ingredients of the U.S. propaganda model are as follows: "1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms; 2) advertising as a primary income source of the mass media; 3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; 4) 'flak' as a means of disciplining the media; and 5) 'anticommunism' as a national religion and control mechanism."

In example after example, Chomsky and Herman show how these ingredients interact and reinforce each other. Take the issue of worthy and unworthy victims. The mainstream press (New York Times, Time Magazine, etc.), spoon-fed by government officials, finds the stories of victims of Soviet oppression to be worth heavy and sustained coverage. But when a U.S. client state (Guatemala, El Salvador), friendly to American business, brutalizes and terrorizes and murders its civilian population, the mainstream media look the other way or, when they do pay attention, they water down their coverage, banish it to a brief on the back page or simply report verifiably false information.

Not exactly the work of a free and independent press.

The Vietnam War is another case example. Contrary to the popularly held notion that the mass media turned the public against the war, the media actually favored the war from its inception, failing to raise even the most fundamental questions of morality in the beginning and then, as the war escalated, publishing the outright lies of the Nixon Administration. If you read the media then (and perhaps even today) you'd think America was righteously defending South Vietnam from the communists in North Vietnam. Utterly false, and the authors meticulously lay out the facts to prove it.

Even the most exhaustive of retrospective media documentaries about the Vietnam War stay true to the propaganda model, calling the war a "tragic error" despite all of the evidence of criminal aggression by the U.S. The authors write: "Our point is not that the retrospectives fail to draw what seem to us, as to much of the population, the obvious conclusions; the more significant and instructive point is that principled objection to the war as 'fundamentally wrong and immoral,' or as outright criminal aggression - a war crime - is inexpressible. It is not part of the spectrum of discussion. The background for such a principled critique cannot be developed in the media, and the conclusions cannot be drawn. It is not present even to be refuted. Rather, the idea is unthinkable."

"Manufacturing Consent" was published in 1988, and the copy I read was a reprint from 1994. I believe there is an updated, expanded version, and I kind of wish I had purchased that one instead of looking for the

cheapest buy. That's because I imagine the latest version delves into the right-wing hysteria propagated by the likes of Fox News, and because I imagine it also takes on the role of the Internet in fragmenting media and, arguably, democratizing it by allowing essentially anyone to become a publisher.

At least, I imagine the latest version does these things. Maybe it doesn't. So I urge anyone interested in reading this most important work - perhaps the best and most incisive dissection of media I have ever read - to buy the most current edition. And then tell me about it.

In any case, prepare to have the fog of our propaganda model - and its central message that America is just great and, with the exception of a few minor tactical errors, is always on the side of freedom and democracy - lifted from your brain.

While Chomsky and Herman offer hope in the form of nonprofit and public TV and radio programs, and the dissident press, they are under no illusions about the political economy of the mass media: "In sum," they write, "the mass media of the United States are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion. This propaganda system has become even more efficient in recent decades with the rise of the national television networks, greater mass media concentration, right-wing pressures on public radio and television, and the growth in scope and sophistication of public relations and news management."
