

War, Elections and Propaganda: “Humanitarian Invasions”, “Responsibility to Protect”, “Terrorist Links”

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In the most deceitful manner, corporate news media fully adopt not only the official lies, but the role of “complicit enabler”, as a former White House press secretary under Bush would call the press, by promoting the whole narrative of “humanitarian invasions”, “responsibility to protect”, “terrorist links” and any other concoction designed to sell wars of aggression...

War and elections are two very appropriate moments to analyze propaganda. As the former becomes more and more ‘normalized’ after a decade and a half of continuous wars (on terror?) in the Middle East, the latter brought us, with Trump’s victory, a sort of bonus I find rather illustrative: a mea culpa from a ‘liberal’ media incapable of reading into an important segment of the public.



Of course, the reasons for this failure are many times beyond the language and topics allowed in mainstream media debate, ‘liberal’ or not, and in the resulting contortions they practice while trying to explain them, important aspects of the propaganda apparatus reach the light of critical observation.

For corporate media, ‘liberal’ also means to leave behind all traces of impartiality and,

despite massive popular disdain for both candidates in the 2016 elections, “describe the prospects of her (Clinton) presidency as one of responsibility, national security, business prosperity and political normalcy”.(1)

When we talk about ‘liberal’ media—with a profound spectrum shift to the right having taken place several generations ago—we are talking about a spectrum of opinion *both pre-eminent and permitted within the mainstream*. In this realm, what could pass as conservative is instead called ‘liberal’, while the modestly liberal is many times regarded as ‘radical’.

This is a simple way of framing reality that parallels the constant ‘moving to the right’, by both Republicans and Democrats (and political systems around the world as well, due to American influence). What was the ‘center’ a decade or two ago is now considered ‘leftist’, and so on.

The angry and disaffected are victims of the neoliberal policies of the past generation... explained by Alan Greenspan as based substantially on ‘growing worker insecurity’. Intimidated working people would not ask for higher wages, benefits and security. (2)

The explanation above is beyond most ‘liberal’ media acceptable language. Note that it isn’t the mention or truthful explanation of neoliberalism, (consciously avoided in mainstream narrative for too long) but the direct and damning accusation which is, in the best of cases, on the margins of the MSM narrative, meaning the public won’t receive that kind of message in a repetitive and insistent fashion, experts will not be summoned to convince anybody of the blowback of neoliberalism on the vulnerable.

Instead, corporate media will indulge in many ‘theories’:

“We are talking about a problem at the very core of journalism: the unstated theory of change that could be summed up as: ‘society will get better when we show where it is wrong’. We are presenting what’s wrong with the world as if that’s all there is”, (3) explained David Bernstein and Tina Rosenberg (New York Times) stating that Trump benefited from the “hyper-cynicism” of people that results from news media’s disposition to show society where it’s wrong, which creates distrust in the establishment and institutions, driving them to outsiders, who many times pose for “change”.

“...the white working class”, they continue, “...have suffered serious economic and social dislocation. Many feel powerless and resent elites and journalists, whom they find arrogant and condescending”. (Emphasis added).

It’s indeed telling that the white working class would group together and regard elites and journalists as sharing such characteristics. Perhaps it relates to the fact that much of mainstream journalism represents the interests of elites, and not society, much less the working class, white or not.

Journalism’s steady focus on problems and seemingly incurable pathologies was preparing the soil that allowed Trump’s seeds of discontent and despair to take root. (4)

Being constantly exposed to the visible surface of human problems while avoiding their substance is, surprisingly, failing to bring about change.

In conclusion, if the central issue lies beyond the political framework news media create for certain (most) topics, the readers and viewers will be diverted into an understanding of that reality by the means of euphemism and scapegoats.

Ideological blind spots

The inability of corporate media to foresee Trump could be explained by its blind spots when considering society's setbacks surviving the economic policies in which corporations thrive. This, of course, is shared by a political establishment also oriented to cater for corporate interests.

The features of neoliberalism that are convenient for private wealth but nefarious for common people tend to circumvent mainstream narrative, in fact, part of the language needed to criticize them do not exist in their lexicon. For most 'liberal media', advocating for consideration of other economical orientations or alternatives is completely off-limits. It's only natural then that they are unable to speak to or even understand important segments of society.

In the words of Craig Murray: "In neither the UK nor the US is a viable radical alternative going to be put before the electorate in the near future. Those who believe either Brexit or Trump presage a break from neoliberalism will be sorely disappointed. *They represent the continuance of neoliberalism, but with popular discontent diverted into added racism*". (5) [Emphasis mine]

When the war efforts are finished, mainstream media soon forgets their role in it and the dire consequences of the catastrophe provoked, with complete disregard for valid criticism on them and the politicians whose lies they promoted.

We could list a number of scapegoats used by the mainstream media to explain Trump's election, all reflecting realities which hardly defined it, but in whose name arguments can be put forward: misogyny, racism, xenophobia, nationalism, Facebook lies too much, etc.

First of all, the 'lesser evil' didn't really conform to the qualities of progressiveness it was said to stand for (in discourse):

"Occupying the right wing of the Democratic Party, Clinton has aligned herself with a war culture that supports drone warfare and continues to support military policies that result in the needless deaths of millions of children in the Middle East, Yemen, Somalia, and other places that bear the brunt of America's foreign policy. It is difficult to imagine, given Clinton's coziness with the financial elite, big corporations, the military-industrial complex and the reigning war culture, that she will do anything that will lessen the violence to which children, both at home and around the globe, will face under her potential reign as President of the United States". (6)

This is a concise excerpt of HRC's affiliations, hardly the 'lesser evil' to a pampered billionaire celebrity with no experience in 'humanitarian invasions'.

We can observe the similarities between news media representation of political leaders and

their own discourse (therefore Obama is 'progressive') and then recognize the disconnection with the facts and their actions (destroying thousands of innocent lives remotely by drones, no questions asked and no due process).

Facebook "lies for Trump"

Mainstream media have accused Facebook's failed algorithms and policies for giving an extra boost to news reporting the Pope endorsing Trump, among other fakes, and finally to Trump himself.

Lying, omitting crucial facts, the vital context, reporting the 'official' version unverified, especially when advancing war propaganda, among other common practices, are a privileges MSM jealously protect.

...fake news is gaining ground, empowering nuts and undermining our democracy. (Nicholas Kristof, NYT) (7)

The scandal over Facebook's putative carelessness over the dissemination of fake posts could misled us into thinking fake news are something rare in mainstream media, which is sadly far from the truth. The most scandalous lies and "fake news" in news media, as a matter of fact, exist and occur routinely in the corporate press, and they cost thousands of hundreds of lives, even millions (remember Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction", the "Viagra-filled" Libyan soldiers about to commit "an atrocity against their own people"? Only two recent examples).

Indeed, lies and fake news fly straight from "official" sources to the NYT front pages without verification when the need to create fear and blind support for violence abroad becomes urgent. This fake news are later reproduced around the world, where local, capitalist-owned mainstream media take the NYT or CNN as authority and anything they publish is automatically validated.

In the most deceitful manner, corporate news media fully adopts not only the official lies, but the role of "complicit enabler", as a former White House press secretary under Bush would call the press, by promoting the whole narrative of "humanitarian invasions", "responsibility to protect", "terrorist links" and any other concoction designed to sell wars of aggression. (8)

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Jessica Yellin, who worked for MSNBC in 2003, said that journalists covering the war on Iraq had been "under enormous pressure from corporate executives, frankly, to make sure that this was a war presented in a way that was consistent with the patriotic fever in the nation". (9)

The claim that Bush decided early in his presidency to attack Iraq is supported by earlier exposés. The leaked minutes of a highly confidential Downing Street memo dated July 23, 2002 records the words of Sir Richard Dearlove, the head of British Intelligence service, MI6: 'Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD (both lies). But the

intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy'. (Parenthesis is mine) (10).

This is only part of the facts and truths not introduced into mainstream narrative, part of their lies and fakes. It resembles all the unclassified intelligence correspondence and WikiLeaks files regarding Syria in the years leading to its ongoing war, explaining the true aims driving US foreign policy there and the nature of the uprising, also disappeared from history by MSM.

This applies like a rule on most armed conflicts where Western interests must be protected, and wars should be "presented in a way that (is) consistent with the patriotic fever in the nation".

Yesterday, Steffan de Mistura, UN envoy to Syria, proposed to create an independent administration for Aleppo, aiming to stop the violence between the Syrian Army and the rebels which Mistura himself admitted, are 50% al-Nusra, al-Qaeda affiliate. (11) The unclassified intelligence documents mentioned above mention in clarity about the creation of a "Salafist Principality in Syria" as a political possibility for the ongoing war. (12)

Just to be clear, Nicholas Kristof was not referring to Bush, Cheney, Blair, Cameron or Obama when talking about "nuts" being empowered by fake news. But perhaps we are going too deep in actually investigating the subjects we report.

Somehow, the idea of mainstream media lying to its public or ignoring facts remains bizarre and outlandish to many journalists, which seems either disingenuous or dangerously naive:

The point was, my daughter had some facts. Or thought she had some facts. The gist was that these so-called facts, which she'd picked up online, were not only enormous and significant, but [were being suppressed by the mainstream media](#). Everyone knew about these facts but were determined to ignore them, because these facts reflected badly on the government. I pointed out to my daughter that I had some little experience of journalism and the news media, and that such a scenario was excessively unlikely. (Tim Lott, *How do I tell my daughter that her online 'truth is a conspiracy theory?* The Guardian, 11/11/16)

I honestly don't think Tim Lott is lying to her daughter nor himself. What am I missing?

Another concerned parent, writing for BuzzFeed, shared:

The question unspooling in my mind... the question I kept asking my husband and our equally horrified and bewildered friends, was how on earth we would face our children and clear the breakfast table gauntlet the morning after. How could we possibly explain to our daughter that, given the choice between a hardworking, imperfect, eminently qualified stateswoman and a reality-television star running on a platform of hatred and fear, so many people — including many of our neighbors, friends, some of our family members — chose the latter? (Nichole Chung, *The Day After the Election, I Tell my Daughter the Truth*. BuzzFeed, 11/10/16)

Those are the hardships of a bourgeois childhood. A few years later they might be facing a harsher truth: their parents indulged in an image of their admired leaders completely divorced from reality, but closer to their own discourses and the way mainstream media would like us to see them. After all, they represent powerful interests, and must be allowed to act on their behalf by faking legitimacy.

Facebook is lying for the wrong interests today, but it's being fixed so "fake news", many times an ambiguous and biased characterization, will only translate the desired channels in the right direction.

Notes

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