

# Is Media A Tool for Propaganda or Tool for Information?

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**Abstract:** - This paper had examined the concept of media in the light of information and propaganda. It utilizes secondary data and content analysis. Richard and Elder determinant of fake and true framework was highlighted. It also employed system analysis and US as a unit of analysis in relation to the rest of the world while theorizing media as tool for propaganda. It discovered that media is a tool for propaganda rather than information in the world's politics. This is based on Richard and Elder framework which disclosed US doing more harm than informing the world with media. In order for media tool for information- balance propaganda, the less developed information states should strive to developed in all ramification, functional education, conversion of internet criminals into resourceful personal, meritocracy in job recruitment and development of critical societies, by which he meant societies that adopt critical thinking as an essential part of their way of life.

**Key words:** Media, propaganda, information, system theory, international politics

## I. INTRODUCTION

The survival of individuals or states in 21st century depends on the amount and quality of information receive, so also how one reacts to it. Media is a channel in which individuals and states receive and pass information. According to Almond, Powell, Strom and Dalton (2004:755) as cited in Anthony and Michael (1) see the media as mass communication devices that are used to transmit information, thought, or feeling to a mass audience without necessarily having face-to-face communication.

News (that is an account of event) can take of either propaganda or information while some time both. The forgoing can be seen in both local and international media. Media as a tool for information entail that the media have dully observed the ethic of giving news. This means that there is high level of accuracy and objectivity.

Information was internalized after the Second World War. Since then the activities of media crew both international and national reflect the interest of a particular society, person, class or state as a whole - propaganda. Richard and Elder (2) provide a framework which will be of importance to analysts in differentiating fake from true news; propaganda and information. We must always ask: what been left out of this article? What would I think if different facts had been highlighted here? What if this article had been written by those who hold a point of view opposite to the one embedded in the story as told? Answer to the above questions help in

determining whether media is a tool for propaganda or tool for information.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The sources of data are secondary in addition to observation. The secondary data are from text books, journal articles, dailies and internet source of data. Due to the nature of the data sources, a content analytical tool is employed while paying attentions to ethical issues.

## III. MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR PROPAGANDA

According to John (3) the concept of 'propaganda' was first used in 1622 by Catholic Pope and it have negative connotation during the early years of the present century when Americans were concerned that axis powers were using propaganda and psychological warfare deviously. To John traditional, propaganda has been considered as the manipulation of opinion toward political, religious, or military ends. Afolabi (4) posit that propaganda is the deliberate manipulation of information to convey more than the appropriate message inherent in it.

Propaganda communicated through the organs of international mass media –television, radio, newspapers, magazines, books and cinemas. Basically this form of propaganda entails the careful selection and use of values images, norms, traditions that are likely to promote the interest of the propagandists by presenting the best or worst possible case for an ideas, programme, product, process, institution that they are interested in. The developed countries in this regard employed such because they control an overwhelming proportion of the communication infrastructure, (Afolabi,4).

According to Machiavelli (5) 'you must understand, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force and that a prudent ruler cannot, and must not, honour his word when it places him at a disadvantage'. Machiavellists and other analysts view this position as purely lies which are above that. In our time, the argument is logical. The developed countries by the virtue of their development they are using the media to propagate their ideology. What they want which at the same time is to their advantage is what the international media will announce.

The developed countries in most cases failed to honour their words (agreement) when it may likely work against their interest. In trying to achieve that, they employed their media (international media like CNN, BBC etc.) to

prostrate the bad side or image of the later part of the treaties. The foregoing was what Nigeria and Britain experience during the Nigeria's first republic through her civil war of the 1970s. Nigeria signed a defend pack with the Britain but when Nigeria civil war started the British refused to assist Nigeria has the entail in the treaty. Media were used to show to the world that Nigerian federal government were killing Biafrans, (Yakubu, 6).

“States frequently wish to influenced other states, both friendly and unfriendly, and to do this they often employ propaganda. Propaganda is any attempt to persuade persons to accept a certain point of view or to take a certain action” (Palmer and Howard 7). During and after the cold war that preceded the second world war, the capitalists countries have rigorously employed the used of media (radio, television, text book etc.) to described socialist as a bad ideology and influenced the world's states to adopt capitalism and democracy. While commenting on the non-capitalist and non-democratic states, they attribute all the obstacles to such states as lack of capitalist ideology and democracy. When they are doing so, they covered the weakness of capitalism and democracy and present themselves as if they are the model for the world.

In the words of Baran (8) during the second world war; posing as two of the many official stations operated by the German army, they frequently transmitted false reports to confuse the enemy or to force official Nazi radio to counter with rebuttal, thus providing the allies with exactly the information they sought”. This is why as far back Sun Tzu(9) discovered that “all warfare is based on deception”. US established in 1940 what would eventually be known as the Voice of America (VOA) to counter enemy propaganda and disseminate information about America. This helped US to fully emerged and strengthen it power position in the world.

Albert et al (10) cited European Union reporter, that lack of supply of registration officials and adequate security marred the success of 2003 general elections in Nigeria. This report sound accurate, but it's not. An accurate report is that which acknowledge the success and failure of such event i.e. neutrality. While reporting on the preparation and conduct of elections in Europeans states they always emphasis on the good aspect while in third world is always bad aspect. The worse of such is how BBC Hausa reported the presidential elections result of 2011 which resulted in massive violence in Northern part Nigeria.

Media propaganda is not only between the developed and developing states. It also involved intra state and inter developed states. Sometimes the propagandist may resort to lying or to the use of faked documents and incidents. Thus Hitler exploited a fantastic story that the Jews were plotting an international conspiracy to rule the world. He proved this charges by citing the infamous protocol of the wise men of Zion, (Palmer &Howard, 6). This better the understanding of the students of politics of international communication that

propaganda is not only “a deliberate manipulation of information but also it reveal hidden agenda of the propagandist to the propagandees.

Propaganda among developed countries is not a recent phenomenon, as far back when Benjamin Franklin was trying to win support for the American revolution both aboard and in the colonies, he forged letters showing how the British, by purchasing bales of scalps, encouraged the Indians to slaughter colonists, (Palmer & Howard, 6). This is a method of propaganda which Afolabi (3) term as careful selection or creation of images and John (2) as a psychological warfare for the attainment of the intended goals. In 2003 USA adopted such machinery to occupied Iraq, (Yakubu, 6).

Information is power and power is the prediction of intended effect. According to BBC report on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2014(11) Russian troops deployed in Ukraine-Poroshenko. The effect of this on Ukraine was that in the words of President Petro Poroshenko “I have made a decision to cancel my working visit to the Republic of Turkey due to the sharp aggravation of the situation in Donetsk region, as Russian troops were actually brought into Ukraine”. According to NATO it has detected a significant increase of Russian arms being supplied to the rebel over the past two weeks. Russian envoy at the organisation for cooperation and security in Europe (OSCE), AndreyKelin, denied there were any Russian troops in Poroshenko. Veto power of the UN Security Council member used satellites to prove that Russian troops in there and German Chancellor Angela Merkel demand an explanation from President Vladimir Putin amid the reports of an incursion. This shows that Russia is using propaganda against Ukraine and the rest of the world.

The September 11 attacks of 2001 on world trade centre in US was announced by the international media that was carried out by Osama bin Ladan. Analysts from United States itself question the position that the attack was carried by Osama. According to such analysts, it was carried out by US in order to blackmail Islam and have access into the Middle East. This suggests that the name of Osama is an attachment and it became questionable for President Bush and Obama to killed Osama three times in difference years.

Following the 11 September attach, US launch war against terrorism in the world via her media, from time to time it mention names of groups and individuals as terrorists around the world. In September 2012 during an attack in Libya city of Benghazi that took the life of Ambassador Chris Stevens, US named the attack as Islamic militant (terrorists). In recent times it name Boko Haram as terrorists group. While killing innocence citizens in US have become the order of the day. Worse of all is killing of school's children. On Saturday Aug 9 2014, Michael Brown was killed by police in Ferguson city(AP news 12). The authority of US has never named her citizens as terrorists compare to other states.

The causes of Arab uprising have remained a disputable debate among scholars around the world. Careful study of the account of the crisis shows one unique thing, i.e. government brutality against her citizens. When the study is limited to Syria and Aleppo city in particular the BBC reporter Rami Ruhayem (13) say that Islamic state (IS) militants in Syria have taken control of several towns in the northern province of Aleppo. According to US guardian paper “the battle has been highly noted for the Syrian army’s indiscriminate use of barrel bombs dropped from helicopters, killing thousand”. This show that president Assad is using deadly weapon against his subject which humanly is bad. In the same way the report hopefully failed to report the kind of weapons the militants are using, (Reliefweb 14).

Innocence Muslim is the title attributed to a controversial anti-Islamic movie ‘trailer’ that was written and produced by Nakoula Basseley Nakoula,(15). Two versions of the 14 minute video were initially uploaded to youtube in July 2012, under the titles the real life of Muhammad and Muhammad movie trailer(16).The European media did not emphasis the effect of the video to world’s peace. The demonstration that follows on was emphasis which gave bad image to the demonstrators than the writer of the video.

According to Alkali (17) “undoubtedly, it was because of this that the United Nation Security Council led by France and Russia vehemently opposed America’s proposal for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, although the US along with British and a few countries did invaded Iraq in 2003 leading to the overthrow of Saddam Hussain”. America and its allies, especially the UK believed, for example that Iraq had stocks of chemical weapons not because of espionage, but because of Saddam’s own 1991 declaration concerning such weapons pursuant to the Security Council cease-fire resolution. That Iraq claimed that it has eliminated her chemical weapons but still refused to allow UN specialists to investigate. After they topple the government of saddam Hussain it was discovered that Iraq did not have chemical weapons which means that it was Bush personal interest that his used media and owing chemical weapon for the attainment of such goals.

The nature of the information is the same things with the nature of world politics. The powerful manipulate the powerless. By virtue of economic, political and technological advancement, the developed countries are privilege to manipulate the communication in the world. The same media report same event differently due to differences of continent or country. There is collaboration between private and public own media in whole cosmos. Their objective is not to inform the world but achieve their national interest.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 Iranian Gen Qassenm Soleimani was killed in an US attack in Baghdad Iraq territory. The President Trump described late Soleimani as monster and the reason for assassinating him that he was planning a ‘big attack’ and have many American bloods in his hands. The ‘big attack’ is not clear to the world and President Trump have not

revealed to where and when Soleimani was planning to attack. From US and others States viewed Trump allegation as baseless, (18, 19, 20).

#### IV. THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF MEDIA AS TOOL FOR PROPAGANDA

There are many theoretical assumptions capable of examining media as a tool for propaganda utilized by states in pursued of their national objectives. The paper employed system analysis in theorizing media as tool for propaganda rather than information. The theory is founded on the assumptions that the world is a system (general system). States are sub-system of the general system. What affect one sub-system may directly or indirectly affect the whole system. Proper functioning of the system is a mutual and proper working of the sub-system.

United States emerged as a hegemonic state in the ashes of the Second World War, the time that communication was internationalized and assumed the onus of proper functioning of the world system. It’s in view of that, that Baran (7) noted that Voice of America was established to counter enemy propaganda. After the Second World War, US believed that by internationalizing capitalism and democracy the world will experience minimal conflict. Media both print (text book etc.), audios and visual are the chief tool utilize.

Since then states that are not capitalist and govern by democratic principles are considered by US as a threat to world peace. What US is using media propaganda to blackmail such leaders (Saddam Hussain, Mohammed Gadaffi, general Q. Soleimani etc.) and achieve her interest. The assumption is that if these leaders continue ruling they may likely cause third world war.

What international media does is to present US as a model state for the rest of the world. From media one will believe that paupers did not exist in Europe and US in particular. While in other part of the world, poverty is the major obstacles for their development and the only option is to adopt capitalism. Sometime the arguments sound as if poverty is the product of bad governance and corruption only. And the position of US is that it have good governance and absolute or minimal corruption which is not. Those who have once visited US question the foregoing media position and there experience of US is that, it has poor populace bad governance and corruption.

The major problems of the world in 21<sup>th</sup> century among others are climate change, ozone layer deflection, global warming, and the media report is goes like civil war/political crises, poverty, bush burning etc. from third world states are the cause of such problems. Scientists prove that industrial smoke is the major cause of global warming, climate change, ozone layer deflection etc. And US are among the major producers of industrial smoke. This is because industrial smoke produce chemical that causes global

warming, ozone layer deflection, acid rain, etc. The scientific prove are highly silenced in the media reports.

US are realizing her foreign policy objectives through the medium of propaganda in the name of salvaging the world. US allies are backing her in such. Weaker leaders and states are identifying themselves with US in some cases not because they believed that US is helping in proper and mutual functioning of the world system but because they are awe.

#### V. HOW TO MAKE MEDIA TOOL FOR INFORMATION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

How to make media tool for information in international politics is by having counter information capacity. Information capacity depends on political, economic, technology and military capability. This mean that the underdeveloped information states should do all things possible to developed. This is what US did according to Baran (7)that US “established in 1940 what would eventually be known as the Voice of America (VOA) to counter enemy propaganda and disseminate information about America.

Underdeveloped information societies should know that the developed information states will never allowed them to develop their information industry. Hence, they should know that chance is not given but taken. For this to be realizing psychological changes and attitudes from individual and states level as a whole should take place. Most undeveloped communication industries like Nigeria do not have a national unity and identity which reflected in general underdevelopment.

One of the seven agenda of late President Shehu Musa Yar’adua of Nigeria is functional education, (Yakubu, 5). This, if realize will help in developing intellectuals who will be at the position of applying Richard and Linda formula of how to detect media bias and propaganda. The working assumptions are by asking questions: what been left out of this article? What I think if difference facts had been highlighted here? What if this article had been written by those who hold a point of view opposite to the one embedded in the story as told?

The increasing rate of internet crime (yahoo boys) in world and Nigeria in particular can be converted into developmental manpower. Those convicted or notice to have exceptional ability should place in places that their brain will be used to aid technology development. Furthermore, skills, ability and experience should play a vital role in job recruitment- meritocracy.

In the process of working media tool for information raising a critical society is crucial. Richard and Linda cited William Graham Sumner in his book ‘Folkways’ that there is possibility of the development of critical societies, by which he meant societies that adopt critical thinking as an essential part of their way of life. Sumner recognized that critical thinking “is our only goatee against delusion, deception,

superstition, and misapprehension of us and our earthly circumstances”. Such societies will be open to all manner of information but very critical in believing and slow in reacting to information.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Communication was internationalized in international politics after the Second World War. This was made possible by the advancement in technology (satellites) and transportation. Since then dissemination of information reflect the interest of the most industrialized communication states, which mean that it goes with the level of economic, political and military development of a state.

It’s an established fact that third countries lack capacity to compete with the developed state in communication industry. And that who has the power to manipulate information will never allow the weak one to reach them. The less industrial communication states musttake chance and develop which will start from individuals to the states level.

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