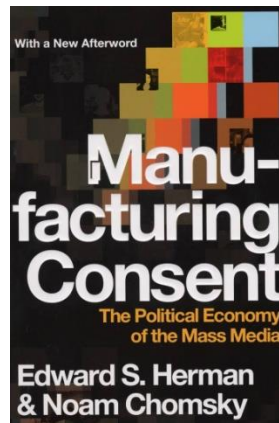


BOOK REVIEW

Rajat Sen*

Manufacturing Consent – The Political Economy of the Mass Media

by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky

***Manufacturing Consent – The Political Economy of the Mass Media*** by Edward S.

Herman and Noam Chomsky (2008)

The Bodley Head, ISBN: 978-18479-207-06, Pp 582, ₹ 1497

Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media is a 1988 book written by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky that offers a thorough analysis of the US media landscape. The book introduces the notion that the country's mass communication media wield substantial influence as ideological institutions, carrying out a system-supportive function through subtle mechanisms such as market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship. These actions are conducted without overt coercion, aligning with the framework of the propaganda model of communication. The phrase "the manufacture of consent," first used by Walter Lippmann in his book "Public Opinion" in 1922, serves as the inspiration for the title. The book's cinematic adaptation, "Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media" (1992), further explores the propaganda model, the political dynamics within the mass communications business, and Chomsky's biography." *Manufacturing Consent* systematically exposes the interconnections between major media conglomerates and corporate interests, substantiated through a series of case studies. A prominent example is the media's selective coverage of "worthy" and "unworthy" victims. The book introduces a propaganda model rooted in extensive research, challenging the conventional portrayal of news media as impartial and resolute truth-seekers. Instead, Chomsky and Herman assert that corporate media, in reality, safeguard the economic, social, and political interests of the media magnates that

finance and manage them. This concept emphasizes that corporate media function as instruments of shaping public opinion and constructing consent.

Hegemony, as delineated by Chomsky, denotes the dominance of one state over another, with a ruling class exerting control over ideas, hampering the recognition of change. Chomsky's proposition highlights mainstream media's structuring of content to constrain dissident voices, curtailing responses to brief soundbites that conveniently fit between advertisements.

Chomsky's examination of thought control within a democratic society underscores several key points:

- 1) As propaganda is to a democracy, violence is to a tyranny.
- 2) The typical person's creativity is remarkable.
- 3) Societies with cog-like systems do not satiate the inherent need for creative work in people.
- 4) People need to be able to spot unjustifiable kinds of power and coercion and resist them.
- 5) The main kind of power that needs to be fought is the system of private ownership over public resources.
- 6) The First Amendment asserts that democracy requires the free flow of ideas and viewpoints.
- 7) The notion that indoctrination is the core element of propaganda has something to do with the creation of consent. In "democratic" countries, indoctrination occurs when control measures based on the propaganda paradigm are required.

Chomsky's Propaganda Model says American media have "filters" -- ownership, advertising, Media elite, Flack and the Common Enemy -- which together emphasize the interests of those in control. Chomsky illustrates this through a case study analyzing the disparate coverage of two foreign atrocities, Cambodia and East Timor, showcasing media bias in favor of the status quo and power elites. Major media, including prominent newspapers, television networks, and wire services, serve as agenda setters, shaping societal perceptions. Dissenting views are marginalized through constraints like concision, where ideas are truncated to fit within media time and space constraints, often limiting comprehensive discussions.

Chomsky contends that both the United States and the rest of the world are in serious crisis and that there are two possible outcomes for both: The masses will take charge of their own future Or there won't be a destiny at all. Chomsky contends that the future holds either the populace's reclamation of control over their destiny or a bleak absence of control. To counter the propaganda model's potency, Chomsky emphasizes the need for activism, alternative media, and intellectual self-defense. Fostering independent thought and critically engaging with a range of press sources, including alternative media, will lay the groundwork for change at both individual and community levels.

*Rajat Sen, is a Junior Research Fellow and PhD Research Scholar at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University, Assam. His current interests lie in Health Communication and Digital Media, Email: sen.rajat54@gmail.com / rajat@tezu.ernet.in