

ROLE OF MEDIA AS POLICY INSTRUMENT: US ADVENTURE IN IRAQ & AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract—During the last 25 years the media technology has shown tremendous growth and now it has become an organized industry. Its influence is wide-spread in every walk of life. It is regarded as fourth pillar of state and its importance is recognized all over the world in all societies. Since long it has been used as policy instrument by the policy-makers to achieve their desired objectives. Recently its significance has enhanced due to its effective role in warfare. The war planners of the United States used media as an important instrument of their war policies during Gulf war 1991, Afghan war, 2001 and Iraq war, 2003. In this paper the author will study how the United States did use media to obtain its war objectives, how it influenced the masses as well as the adversaries, what were its positive and negative effects. The author will also examine whether the media, which is expected to play a neutral role in order to deliver fair piece of information to the people in order to apprise them of the facts, has discharge its obligation or it has worked as a policy instrument and indulged in unfair and biased reporting and concealing the facts to mislead the people.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last few years the media has made a tremendous growth and turned into an organized industry. The internet and DVD has revolutionalized its future. Its scope and the range of influences have extended to all over the world as the news of one country is received by the people of other country within short span of time. Due to fast communication and expansion of media horizon the world is regarded as a global village where distance has been minimized among the people of different countries. Technology has changed the news industry since the Persian Gulf War, with more 24-hours TV news programming and constant internet reporting that require steady updates in an intensely competitive environment. Some argue that journalistic standards, particularly on the Web, have declined, with gossip and unverified information more readily reported than before.

Urbanization, industrialization and modernization have created the societal conditions for the development of mass media. The bulk of the content of the mass media is not designed to challenge or modify the social and political structure of a nation, either in a state or in a democratic society. The mass media plays a crucial role in forming and reflecting public opinion: it communicates the world to individuals, and it reproduces modern society's self-image. Critiques suggested that the media destroys the individual's

capacity to act autonomously - sometimes being ascribed an influence reminiscent of the tale-screens of the dystopian novel 1984. The empirical studies, however, suggest a more complex interaction between the media and society, with individuals actively interpreting and evaluating the media and the information it provides. The consequences and ramifications of the mass media relate not merely to the way newsworthy events are perceived (and which are reported at all), but also to a multitude of cultural influences which operate through the mass media.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE GULF AND AFGHAN WARS

Soon after assuming power the US President, George.W.Bush unveiled his aggressive posture and US's right of pre-emptive strike against the enemy countries. However, his war policy target was Muslim countries whose rulers were hostile to the United States. His father initiated Gulf War I against Iraq to punish it for having anti-Israel stance and occupying Kuwait. The Gulf War I was fought in the early 1990 and US along with its 28 allied countries forces declared war on Iraq to force it to vacate Kuwait, In the end they were successful and Iraqi forces were compelled to abandon their occupation of Kuwait.

After 9/11/2001 terrorist attack on World Trade Centre US and its allied forces attacked Afghanistan to end Taliban Government, which refused to eject Osama Bin Laden, the allegedly main accused of the above tragedy. This was the initiation of war against terrorism and at one time US President G.W.Bush termed it a crusade. Pakistan was one of the main players as a partner in the war against terrorism. It did not only provide logistic support but also managed to cause rift in the rank of Taliban leadership, resulting in the fall of their government in Kabul. In the end, US and NATO's forces occupied Afghanistan in 2002. Later on, Taliban initiated guerilla warfare against foreign occupied forces and this movement was emerged as a strong resistance movement by 2007 and is giving tough time to US and NATO's forces.

The second Gulf War (in fact, Iraq War) launched under the pretext that Iraq was having weapons of mass destruction (WMD). However, the real objective was to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussain and the occupation of Iraq to make US strategic presence in the Middle East to support Israel against growing military power of Arab countries and to capture vast oil reserves to ensure its supply to the United States and its allies. Any how the US and its allied forces

attacked Iraq and physically occupied it. Later on, in 2007 Iraqi President Saddam Hussain was executed under a court order. But this occupation has proved fatal for the United States because it suffered heavy casualties and economic cost. The insurgency started soon US and its allied force's occupation of Iraq gain momentum day after day and by June 2007 US alone roughly suffered around 4000 casualties and about 20,000 injuries, generating uproar in the United States and consistent demand for withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. In order to avoid casualties, many US allies including Britain withdrew their major forces leaving US alone to face insurgency.

III. IMAGINARY MOOD OF REPORTING WAR EVENTS

The method of reporting war events during above three wars were very sophisticated. The people watched these bloody wars on their television screen in such a way as they were seeing a war movie in which US President Bush issues his ultimatum to the villain of the peace, and so sets the tone of what was to come. A war made for the small screen, one which was minutely stage managed, and in which every shot needed to be approved by the script editors. Readers of newspapers and viewers of what we have come to call "CNN war-porn" during those first few days of the war would recall the breathless tone of proceedings. Reports in the newspapers attempted to evoke a sense of moment with purple and gushing prose, satellite crossovers on live TV brought the viewer to the locations, albeit with virtually no actual information about what was going on. In the lead up to the war the sharp end of the propaganda war can be found in the communications of the U.S. President and the U.K. Prime Minister to their legislatures and in public statements. It appeared as US organization, Global Communications, was managing war events from US Defense Department.

IV. MEDIA WARFARE

The Gulf wars I and II as well as Afghan War were the classical example of Media warfare. From the initiation to the end of these wars the United States and Western countries substantially used the media as an instrument of their war policy and it was appeared as the media was fighting war against the adversaries rather than US and its allied forces. All the US and Western TV channels showed the missile attacks from originating point to target areas. People all over the world saw the shooting of missile from US war ships and hitting the targets, generating an environment of terror. TV channels also telecasted live news regarding the capturing of enemy commanders, their surrendering and brilliant operation of allied forces. All of these events were not spontaneous or incidental, but they were pre-planned. The US Defense Department hired defense correspondents from different countries, trained them in basic security measures and war tactics, assigned them task how to move along with allied forces and how to report the events. These defense correspondents worked under the supervision of US forces and they played crucial role in concealing the facts by ignoring the casualties and

atrocities of allied forces and highlighting the weakness of their adversaries through their biased reporting. They aired false stories in the western media against Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussain, allegedly symbolizing them as main enemies of the Western world and core threat to their strategic interests all over the world with the objective to generate hatred among western public and to justify illegal occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. Now we study how US managed such huge media warfare to manipulate the situations both in Iraq and Afghanistan.

V. METHODOLOGY OF MEDIA WARFARE

In order to mobilize public in favour of US war policies different methodologies were used and many institutions and organization were created in the Pentagon (US Defense Department) to execute these methodologies. The organizations created for this purpose worked covertly inside and outside the United States. However, general public of the United States mostly were unaware of their activities and covert operations. Some of these organizations are the followings:-

A. OFFICE OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE (OSI):

The Office of Strategic Influence was the organization established by US Defense Department in February 2002, about four month after alleged terrorist attack on World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. The objectives of this organization was the "planting of false stories in foreign media" in order to manage perceptions of the War on Terror. This organization was a part of US game plan against war of terrorism. And what is clear from the fact that the OSI was established in the first place is that lying for the purposes of pursuing war was a key part of the game plan in the US Defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld's suite in the Pentagon.

B. ESTABLISHMENT OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATION:

In January 2003 George W. Bush Junior, flush with his very own signed and sealed congressional authorization to go to war against Iraq, ordered to form a new organization capable of managing similar PR tasks to those previously contracted out to PR agencies working for administration friendly nation states. Apparently there is no hard evidence that the New Office of Global Communications working out of the White House is doing the work that the OSI used to do, nor is there any evidence it isn't. However there is a great deal of evidence that someone has been playing the disinformation warfare game on a grand scale from White House and Pentagon.

C. US-BRITISH DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN:

In the lead up to the war the sharp end of the propaganda war can be found in the communications of the U.S. President George W. Bush and the U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair to their legislatures and in public statements. Tony Blair's propaganda was a great deal more sophisticated than that of George Bush, but equally deceptive in the final analysis. The White House strategy appeared to be to mention September 11th as frequently as possible in the context of Iraq so as to drive an impression in the public

mind that Iraqi President Saddam Hussain was involved in organizing the 9/11 tragedy. This flew in the face of all the evidence, but never minds, it is a classic propaganda ploy used by the Nazis and it worked a treat. Repeat a single simple idea often enough and you will drum it into the minds of your audience. By the time war broke out nearly 50% of Americans believed that Saddam was involved in 9/11.

Another point of propaganda was that Iraq was lying about its attempts to purchase uranium from Niger to produce weapons of mass destruction. Most of the knowledgeable analysts know now that all these stories were a set of forgeries. Notably these dossiers formed not only the basis of then British Premier, Tony Blair's arguments, but also the basis of speeches given at the UN both by US President G.W. Bush and then US Secretary of State Powell.

VI. STRATEGIC-INFORMATION WARFARE

The officials of Pentagon claim that "The US Defense Department is equipped and trained for tactical psychological warfare, distributing leaflets and flying aircraft in Afghanistan that broadcast information and popular Afghan music long forbidden under the Taliban." "We don't have a decently organized psychological-warfare camp," a senior US military official told. "Some could be done cleverly and inexpensively, but nothing is being done at all. The government hasn't seemed concerned about doing anything about it, and as a result we have found a whole generation of Arabs and Muslims who have been fed a steady diet of anti-American propaganda without hearing a U.S. response." This skewed public-information flow, he says, has "isolated those willing to cooperate with us. This is a very long-term, strategic problem. In order to solve this problem the following reported strategy was adopted:-

1. To develop an interagency strategic-information-warfare program for long-term operations in the Middle East, South Asia and other parts of the world where terrorist groups are threatening US interests.

2. To expand U.S.-controlled media outlets, particularly radio and print, in the languages of targeted areas, such as Arabic, Farsi, Pashto and Urdu and integrate the programming with information-warfare operations.

3. To more aggressively recruit and retain foreign journalists, editors, political analysts and cultural figures as agents of influence.

4. To attack the madrassas (mosque-run religious schools), which teach ideology but no skills and turn out tens of thousands of angry and resentful graduates every year.

5. To induce foreign TV and radio stations to stop cooperating with the enemy or to cooperate with the United States.

6. To jam the broadcasts or disrupt the activity of non-cooperative foreign TV and radio stations in the region.

VII. ATTACK ON MEDIA

During Iraq war when the US forces intentionally started killing innocent people refusing to accept US illegal occupation of their country. The independent reporters from different countries began to highlight these atrocities, resulting emergence of some reaction in the western public

against innocent civilian killing. It enraged the US war planners who decided to punish these defense correspondents. On April 8, 2003 U.S. military forces launched what appeared to be deliberate attacks at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad where independent journalists were staying to cover the war events. The attack was resulted in the killing of three and injuring four others. In one incident, a U.S. tank fired an explosive shell at the Palestine Hotel, two journalists, Taras Protsyuk of the British news agency Reuters and Jose Couso of the Spanish network Telecinco, were killed; three other journalists were injured. The tank, which was parked nearby, appeared to carefully select its target, according to journalists in the hotel.

War casualties and failure of political, economic and military policies to perpetuate their occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan without-evaluation of the heavy human and economic costs of these wars. Economic costs have mounted to nearly a trillion US dollars while human cost is also heart-breaking and irreparable. The underlying objective to control Oil reserves of Iraq and to use them own benefits could not be obtained. The Oil prices have crossed US \$90 per barrel generating high inflation throughout world. Similarly, the capital flight from US's economy has accelerated, resulting in liquidity crush and default of sub prime mortgage loans.

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