



# THE STUDY OF PROPAGANDA

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## **BOOK CHAPTER**

### **Meaning of Propaganda**

Propaganda has been defined in many ways by several scholars at different times and no one definition is widely accepted as the only recognized definition of propaganda. Propaganda is a form of communication that is aimed at influencing the attitude of community toward some cause or position. Propaganda presents information primarily to influence an audience, select facts to encourage a particular synthesis, or uses loaded messages to produce an emotional rather than rational response to the information presented. The desired result is a change of the attitude towards the subject in the target audience to further a political agenda.

According to Barukh, (1982:7) the word propaganda could be likened to the gardener's practice to disseminate plants by planting shoots. Defining propaganda therefore has always been a problem because of its difficulties in differentiating it from other types of persuasion. However, almost all their definitions agree that operationally, the concept consists of messages in a context of actions, which as the purpose of communication, is to inspire the audience to act in a particular way. Joweth & O'Donnell (2005:7) have provided a concise workable definition of the term; they therefore defined it in the following ways. Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitive, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired interest of the propagandist.

Another comprehensive description of propaganda was given by Richard Alan Nelson, (1996:232-233). Propaganda is neutrally defined as a systematic form of purposeful persuasion that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions and actions of specified target audiences for ideological, political or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages (which may or may not be factual) via mass and direct media channels. A

propaganda organization employs propagandist, who engages in propagandas – the applied creation and distribution of such forms of persuasion.

The above definitions focus mainly on the communicative process involved, precisely on the purpose of the process and allow propaganda to be considered objectively, and then interpreted as positive or negative behaviour depending on the perspective of the viewer or listener. Ghosh (2009:115) in his own way noted that propaganda is more like psychological warfare targeted at specific groups. He stressed further that it is usually an attempt to persuade or influence leaders as well as the general population of other countries. To him, since propaganda is generally directed at the enemy of those who are hostile, it involves the manipulation of facts and symbols to attain the desired effects on the minds of an audience. Coulombis & Wolfe (1981:182-183) defined propaganda as a process involving a communicator whose intention is to change the attitudes, opinions and behaviour of a target population using spoken, written and behavioural symbols and employing media such as books, pamphlets, films, lectures, and so on.

This definition focuses very much on the means and processes of communication which is very vital to the study of propaganda. Terence (1962:27) defined propaganda as a deliberate attempt by some individuals or groups to control or alter the attitude of other groups by the use of the instruments of communications with the intention that those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist. The phrase, “deliberate attempt” is very important in Terence’s definition because it distinguished propaganda from non-propaganda. Terence recognized an act as propaganda only if and when it becomes part of a deliberate campaign to induce action through the control of attitudes.

Akpotor (2011:18) on his own part defined propaganda as, deliberate efforts by governments to influence the attitudes and behaviour of foreign populations or of specific ethnic, class or religious, economic or linguistic groups within those populations in the expectation that, such influenced groups could in turn influence the attitude and actions of their own government. Akpotor’s definition laid emphasis on the phrase deliberate efforts like in Terence’s definition. This definition of propaganda embraced both domestic and international governmental efforts. However, one might view it as a shortcoming because it emphasized only government organization in propaganda consideration. Private organizations and individuals also employ the use of propaganda in one way or the other. However, for the purpose of this research, Akpotor’s work is very relevant and helpful.

Frankel (1979:130-134) also defined propaganda as any systematic attempt, to affect the minds, emotions and actions of a given group of people, for a specific public purpose. Frankel qualified his definition by pointing out its basic characteristic. To him, propaganda is always addressed to the people of any group in any organization for the purpose of any vital interest of the propagandist. Frankel’s definition covers all areas within which

propaganda could be applied. This includes government's organizations and individuals. Rodee et al (1983:189) further defined propaganda as the propagation of ideas through promotion, persuasion and the utilization of influence. Rodee's definition does not encourage the use of force in the promotion and propagation of ideas; rather persuasive means such as lobbying are ways of promoting ideas. This is very relevant to electioneering campaigns and other governmental processes.

Truman (1951:223) is also recognized as one of the scholars that have done extensive and useful study of propaganda. He viewed propaganda as any attempt by the manipulation of words and words substitutes and consequently the behaviour of a number of individuals concerning controversial matter. In Truman's own view, propaganda is important only when there is a controversial issue. This refers to crisis situation which could be issues of domestic or external affairs. The shortcoming of Truman's work is that the word controversial was not given clear definition. Its meaning might vary from one person, group or government to another. In addition to the above, propaganda which is not limited to any particular issue, could be used in many forms, whether controversial or not. In other words, propaganda can be useful in non-conflict situations, as pointed out above. Yet another scholar, Irion (1950:19) defined propaganda as one sided effort to present information usually by secret or undercover method which the author knows to be at least partially false. Irion went further to point out that these groups may emphasize the use of such devices as the concealed sources, distortion, suppression or fabrication and non rational appeals, i.e. appeals to the emotions or to the affections rather than to reason. It is true to some extent that propaganda takes some secret methods in carrying out its message; however the use of scientific communication devices might expose such secrecy. Adversaries could use the scientific communication appliances to discover their opponent's propaganda techniques and therefore suppress its spread. Yet another work on propaganda that is useful to this research endeavour is that of Sills (2005:579-588) in the New Encyclopedia Britannica which viewed propaganda as a psychological warfare which is the prewar or wartime use and directed primarily at confusing or demoralizing enemy populations or troops, putting them off guard in the face of coming attacks or inducing them to surrender.

The above definition summarized the meaning of propaganda exclusively in crisis period which could be pre-war or wartime situation or both. No doubt, a lot of work has been done on the concept of propaganda especially regarding its meaning. In other words, definitions given to the concept of propaganda are numerous and various but not one of them could be regarded as the only generally accepted definition of propaganda. A common element in the above definitions shows that propaganda involves the changing of attitudes of propagandee to the wish of the propagandist. We can therefore define propaganda as the manipulation of attitudes and opinions of people through words, gestures, flags, music and lectures. It is a way of inspiring the audience to act in a particular way to the wish of the propagandist.

## History of Propaganda

The use of propaganda dates back to pre-history. In other words, propaganda could be seen as old as man himself. It has been a human activity as far back as reliable recorded evidence exists. Nagle et al (2009:133) noted that the Behistun inscription (C.515BC) detailing the rise of Darius I to the Persian throne is viewed by most historians as an example of propaganda. Artifacts from pre-history and from early civilizations, gave evidence that dazzling railment, mystic insignia and monuments were used to advertise the purported majesty and supernatural powers of early rulers and priests. During the above periods, the activities were not named even though it was being practiced. Rabshakeh, the Assyrian officer, as the Bible recorded in 11 Kings 18:17-37 used propaganda to drive fear into the heart of King Hezekiah and his subjects in Israel that the king almost broken-hearted, making him to rend his clothes and covering himself with sackcloth.

In the modern time, the word propaganda can be traced to the Latin word “propagare” to propagate which actually evolve from the Roman Catholic usage. It was used the first time in 1622 by the Catholic faith among the committee of cardinals, for the propagation through a special sacred congregation. It was referred to as “congregation de propaganda fide” (Congregation for Propagating the Faith) (Patridge, 1977, 2248)

According to Frankel (1979) since 1622 a standing committee of cardinals had been established to be in charge of propaganda of all missionary activities in the Roman Catholic Church. So to many Catholics, the word has ecclesiastical utterances, responsible and respectable connotations that it lacks in many other contexts.

Despite the Catholic usage of the term, no elaborate systematic study of propaganda appeared for centuries, not until the industrial revolution had brought about mass production and raised hopes of immensely high profit through mass marketing (Encyclopedia Britannica). Sequel to the above and towards the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers began to undertake studies of consumers that could be motivated and their responses to various kinds of salesmanship advertising and other marketing technique. At this point in time, the activities of the propagandist were limited to domestic activities mainly related to promotion of sales. Propaganda did not actually play a significant role in international affairs until the 1914-18 First World War. Military inventions and the spread of particularistic nationalism in addition to attempt at democracy have caused recent wars, social revolutions and counter revolutions to reach proportions that called for mobilization of entire national populations (Sills, 2005). Hence, in the World War I and II as well as the cold war, both United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) invested in massive propaganda campaign conducted by all the major belligerent nations in W.W.I. Since the end of the cold war, almost every state has taken into serious consideration the use of propaganda. States now have ministries or separate departments for the activities of propaganda to be carried out. The activities of propaganda are more prominent especially during periods of crisis, depending on how volatile they are. Today, propaganda which is an element of communication has assumed a position so important that no state or organization can afford to ignore.

## **Types of Propaganda**

Propaganda in this study is classified into three broad types based on the source and nature of the message. These are Black, Gray and White Propaganda.

### **Black propaganda**

This refers to propaganda that emanates from a source other than the true source. It is identified as being from one source, but is in fact from another. The idea behind this is to disguise the true origin of the propaganda, be it from an enemy country or from an organization with a negative public message. Baran and Davis (2003:72) define Black propaganda as, deliberate and strategic transmission of lies. In the same vein, Ogbeni (2010:60) stressed that black propaganda could be seen as the deliberate and strategic transmission of lies by manipulation of cognition, perception, altering pictures in the head, for specific beliefs, expectation and desires of the propagandist. In black propaganda, the content of messages benefits the source and the motives are for bad reasons. Opposition to black propaganda is often unavailable and may be very dangerous to reveal, because public cognizance of black propaganda tactics and its sources would undermine or backfire and the intention of the propagandist would be thwarted. Black propaganda is mostly used during conflict and war situations. Ghosh (2009:116) noted that verbal and audio visual weapons are used in communication hiding the true identities of the communicators and producing forged and fabricated documentations aimed at creating confusion and chaos in the ranks of the enemy. For example forecast for large unemployment, food scarcity, labour, ethnic unrest and famine. In the Angolan Civil war of 1992 – 2002, the MPLA employed the use of black propaganda strategies by isolating, discrediting, cutting of sources of arms, funds and logistics supply against the UNITA.

In Darfur, the Janjaweed under the direction of regular government forces reportedly unleashed a campaign of terror against civilians, (UNHCHR, 2004). The Sudanese government has been accused of suppressing information by jailing and killing witnesses since 2004 and tampering with evidences such as mass graves to eliminate their probative value, (Human Rights watch, 2004). The Sudanese government has been able to obscure much of what has gone on in Darfur. (International Press Institute, 2005)

### **Gray Propaganda**

This is the type of propaganda that has no identifiable source or author. The source of information cannot be specifically identified. Gray propaganda suggests the use of various types of communication to express the desire, wishes, belief and expectations of the propagandist. This is applied by making the enemies believe falsehood using straw arguments. For example, to make someone believe ‘A’, one releases as Gray propaganda ‘B’ which is the opposite of ‘A’, letter ‘B’ is discredited by using some Straw man. The enemy will then assume ‘A’ to be true instead of ‘B’ opposition to Gray propaganda when revealed (often by an inside source) may create one level of public outcry. According to Ghosh (2009:116) Gray propaganda begins when relation between the communicator and the government of the target state begins to deteriorate. Therefore exaggeration and falsehood creep into the communications and propaganda becomes combative and competitive in content

and philosophy. Gray propaganda is mostly applicable to various forms of human life such as business, religions, politics and international relations (Ogbeni, 2010).

### **White propaganda**

This is the type of Propaganda that generally has openly identified source. In other words, the source of information of White propaganda is not hidden. This type of propaganda portrays only what is good about the ideas, beliefs or policy of government methods of persuasion. It is mainly used by incumbent leaders when seeking for support to come back to power. It refers to those cooperative and straightforward campaign designed to explain the borders and over it. This generally involves activities in cultural and educational domains involving cultural and educational exchange programmes. Magazines, pamphlets, films and lectures are the usual methods of orchestrating the message for cultivation of mutually beneficial friendship and cooperation. Mclean and McMillan (2003) noted that White propaganda was employed by Britain through print, radio, film and spoken word to put the best gloss on state policy and fortunes of British army. In Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan used White propaganda to ensure his coming back to power by purveying the positive side of his past administration to come back on board. In Sudan President Omar Bashir is also using White propaganda to ensure that he remains in office by mentioning the things he felt is an achievement by his administration such as the various peace agreements he had signed with the Southern Sudan. Opposition to White propaganda is often readily found and may slightly discredit the propaganda source.

### **Techniques of Propaganda**

Propaganda activities could be carried out in many ways. In other words, there are many types of propaganda techniques. For example, Lee and Lee (1939:22-25), provided a framework for analyzing propaganda techniques, otherwise referred to as the Lee's framework. The choice of propaganda techniques depends on the objectives and target audience of the propagandist. Most propaganda techniques are used during crisis and war situations such as the Darfur crisis. Some of the propaganda techniques are:

**Name Calling:** This technique attaches importance to person or country. The propagandists call the targets different names so as to arouse him emotionally. He incites fear to the hearers in the interest that the bad names will cause hearers to construct a negative opinion about a group or set of beliefs or ideas that the propagandist wants hearers to denounce. The propagandist therefore expects response favourably from these targets without examining any evidence. He relates his appeals to stereotypes that already exist, e.g. many names were given to Hitler in the World War II. The African blacks in Darfur are given series of names which is derogatory and with the intention of reducing them to second class citizens. According to Power (2004:56-57), the term "Zurga" for blacks is used in a derogatory manner. As Chechade (2005) correctly emphasized, in Sudan, being Arab refers to one's physical appearance and more to ones state of mind.

**Glittering Generality:** This is similar to name calling except that emphasis is concentrated on ideas or policy rather than on individual or state. This technique was prominent during the ideological cold war between communism and capitalism.

Glittering generalities are emotionally appealing words that are applied to an idea but present no concrete argument or analysis. The idea of total eradication of the core ethnic groups in Sudan and the use of the concept of genocide was a glittering generality to believe. Former US Secretary of States, Colin Powell used the term genocide in his testimony to the senate Foreign Affairs committee based on his on site assessment of the Darfur situation in 2004 (Power, 2004:56-73)

**Transfer:** In this technique, the propagandist tries to note a particular idea or policy which he will use to convince the target to approve or disapprove his own (propagandist) idea. A way of provoking hostile attitude among religious people against communism is to equate it with atheism. On the other hand, the communist equates capitalism with decadence. Sudanese government equates the black's Sudanese version of Islamic religion with Animism or Sufism only to incite the black population in Darfur.

**Plain Folks or Common Man:** In this case, the propagandist tries to identify himself as closely as possible with the values and life style of the targets by using local slang, accent and idiom. The propagandist makes sure that the audience does not see him as a foreigner or stranger.

**Testimonial:** are quotations in or out of context especially cited to support or reject a given policy, action, programme or personality. The reputation or the role of the individual giving the statement is exploited here; the propagandist uses an esteemed person or institution to criticize an idea or political entity. For example, using Mohammed or Jesus Christ to criticize other religious groups because, they are authorities.

This is done in an effort to cause the target audience to identify itself with the authority or to accept the authority's opinion and beliefs as his own.

**Selection:** The propagandist depends mainly on the essential facts to prove pre-determined objectives. These facts need to be well selected. The central government of Khartoum selected the pure religion of Islam as against Sufism for Darfur region.

**Bandwagon:** In this technique, the propagandist convinces the targets to belong to or be in accord with the crowd. The target audience is appealed to and persuaded to join in and take the course that everyone else is taking. It is similar to testimonial except that a mass of people rather than a single esteemed person or an institution serves as the attraction.

**Frustration Scapegoat:** One easy way to create hatred and relieve frustration is to create a scapegoat through the use of the technique. This involves assigning blame to an individual or group, thus alleviating feelings of guilt from responsible parties and distracting attention from the need to face the problem for which blame is being assigned. An example of this is the myth created by Hitler that Germany's internal and foreign problems were created by the Jews who were often equated with communists. He therefore made the Jews scapegoat during the World War II.

**Stereotyping:** This technique attempts to arouse prejudice in an audience by labeling the object of the propaganda campaign as something the target audience fears, hates or finds undesirable. For instance, reporting on a foreign country or social group may focus on the stereotypical traits that the reader expects even though they are far from being representative of the whole country or group in war situation. The propaganda intentions

might include portraying the enemies with stereotype racial features. In Darfur, the Khartoum government always sees the Black Africans of Darfur as inferior race and also with lower type of Islam as they mix Islamism with Animism.

### **Demonizing the Enemy**

The propagandist makes the individual from the opposing nation or from a different ethnic group or those who support the opposing view point appear to be subhuman e.g. Vietnam War era term “gooks for National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam aka Vietnam or “VC” Soldiers worthless of immoral through suggestion or false accusation.

**Disinformation:** This is a form of black propaganda which entails the giving of false information deliberately to the target audience. It also involves the creation or deletion of information from public records, with the purpose of making a false record of an event or the actions of a person or organization. During the Angolan Civil war of 1992-2002, the two parties involved in the war employed the use of disinformation type of propaganda. According to Rozes (2001:2), MPLA government forces FAA, attacked UN humanitarian services and claimed it was done by UNITA. Also the MPLA government of Angola allocated funds meant for food to defense thereby increasing the defense expenditure. The Sudanese government has been accused of suppressing information by jailing and killing witnesses since 2004 and tempering with evidence such as massive graves to eliminate their probative values.

**Censorship;** this is the suppression of publications thought to be seditious or undesirable. In crisis situation, actors employed the use of censorship to discredit the opposition. During the Gulf crisis of 1991, Saddam Hussein disallowed journalists from publishing the activities of his soldiers. The MPLA government banned the publication of military information without approval. According to Ogbeni (2010:59-71), this was to keep the knowledge of the government’s loss of control over UNITA. In Darfur, accurate numbers of dead have been difficult to estimate, partly because the Sudanese government places formidable obstacles on the way of journalists, attempting to cover the conflict. (Sudan Annual Report, 2004)

**Denials:** This refers to statements or actions that say something or an issue is not true or does not exist. It also refers to refusal to accept that something is unpleasant or painful is true. In the Angola war of 1992, MPLA accused UNITA of shooting down UN Relief plane. UNITA denied it; UNITA refuted the accusation that it deliberately failed to attend February 1993 Addis Ababa peace meeting. UNITA claimed delegates were unable to locate the venue of the peace meeting (Ogbeni, 2010:59-71). In Darfur crisis, the Sudanese government denied that there was no ethnic cleansing in Darfur. Issa (2007) remarks the denial made by Sudanese government which said there is no ethnic cleansing being perpetrated in Darfur, only great instability and clashes between the Sudanese government and rebel movements.

**Slogans:** This is using a phrase that may include labeling which tends to act as emotional appeals. Opponents of the US’s invasion and occupation of Iraq use the slogan “blood for oil to suggest that the invasion and its

human losses were done to access Iraq's rich oil. On the other hand, supporters who argue that the US should continue to fight in Iraq use the slogan "cut and run" to suggest withdrawal is cowardly or weak.

**Military Action:** This involves using of military weapon to attack, invade or assault opponents, in order to control the opponent's stronghold. According to Roses (2001:2), MPLA led government used mercenaries in Namibia and Zimbabwe to move Angolans from rural areas to towns in order to counter UNITA military action. UNITA attacked the US and humanitarian workers thus cutting off aid to people. The actors in the Darfur crisis, the government of Sudan and the rebels engaged in military actions at various periods since the beginning of the crisis.

**Oversimplification:** - This technique entails using favourably and glaring generalities to provide simple answers to complex problems which could be social, political, economic or military issue.

**Obtain Disproval:** This technique is used to persuade a target audience to disapprove of an action or idea by suggesting that the idea is popular with groups hated, feared or held in contempt by the target audience, thus if a group that supports a certain policy is led to believe that undesirable, subversive or contemptible people support the same policy, then the members of the group may decide to change their original position.

**Straw Man:** A Straw man argument is an informal fallacy based on misrepresentation of an opponent's position. To attack a "straw man" is to create the illusion of having refuted a proposition by substituting a superficially similar proposition and refuting it without ever having actually refuted the original position

### **Channels and Aims of Propaganda**

The channels, through which propaganda is disseminated, are numerous, including: Mass media, personal words, posters, flags, campaigns, handbills and prizes. While analyzing World War 1 propaganda, Harold D. Lasswell summarized four basic strategic aims of propaganda in war situation which are,

- (a) To mobilize hatred against the enemy
- (b) To preserve the friendship of allies.
- (c) To preserve the friendship and if possible to procure the co-operation of neutrals.
- (d) To demoralize the enemy

For a propagandist's target to be hit, which of course is the major aim of embarking on the use of propaganda, certain basic conditions have to be met. According to Lee and Lee (1939:22-25), propaganda requires a good organization or agency as one of the conditions to be met before success could be achieved. This body or organization according to Lee formulates foreign propaganda, trains and deploys staff and review along with the foreign office, the process which has been made. Another condition is the provision of adequate finance. This helps to update Libraries, procurement of radios and radio services, acquiring of information centers and other propaganda machineries. It is also require that the propagandist organizes front movement which is equipped to infiltrate voluntary foreign organization. Propaganda also presupposes that there should be adequate fund for the publication of journals, reprints of local newspapers and paying for advertisement spaces. The above and many more are the conditions necessary for successful propaganda.

## Targets of Propaganda

Frankel (1979) identified four targets of propaganda as follows:-

- i. Propagandists own people:- They are to be inspired, indoctrinated and adequately kept informed. Their morale and dedication should be kept high so as to get their support for the dissemination of propaganda directed towards one's opponent.
- ii. Populace of those groups or people of states associated in a friendly and cooperative manner with the propagandizing state. The propagandists have to explain his policy to those friendly states in such a way as to impress them with the necessity of remaining true to their allegiance.
- iii. Another target of the propagandist is the states that are either in support of the propagandist's policies or those of his opponent. The propagandists either win their support or prevent them from active opposition.
- iv. The unfriendly states where hostile or opposition has to be reduced. The propagandist also seeks to loosen their bonds of loyalty to their own official policy.

## Limitations of Propaganda

Several factors tend to inhibit the best conceived plans to establish thought and control over the citizen's mind, by way of propaganda. The influence inherent in the cultural environment of the propagandee is one of the inhibiting factors. The cultural belief as well as the norms of the society could make it difficult for the propagandist to influence his own policy on them. When propaganda becomes too monotonous, the target might become less interested in finding out the facts. This occur when the propagandist attach much importance to a particular issue repeatedly. When propaganda carries inherent ambiguity which it fails to clear, especially in a complex situation, then the subject develops a profound indifference, become actively hostile to pressures and might not be moved.

Another limitation lies in the formal rules and regulations that govern the dissemination of information in the particular society. These legal obstacles are usually very broad. In most cases, government exercises censorship in matters affecting its vital interests, such as military information. Government censorship also protects the individual against libel, slander and defamation of character. In International crisis situation, International law places limitation on warring parties. The Geneva Convention forbids the maltreatment of Prisoners of war and parading them in public.

## Measurement of Propaganda

Another area of importance to the study of propaganda is its measurement. The world has been witnessing an upsurge in propaganda campaigns. Scholars have noted some ways by which propaganda effects could be measured so as to enable them know whether more efforts are needed or a change of the particular technique in operation has to be effected. The ways are:

**Content Analysis:** This involves the use of quantitative and qualitative evidence such as the numbers of column, inches of printed spaces, of seconds of radio or television time that propaganda occupied, and analysis of newspapers reports.

**Intensive Interview:** Propaganda effect can be measured by conducting interviews with refugees and expellees or persons on exile.

**Extensive Observation:** Participant observers can go to the relevant places, take part in the activities of the target of the propaganda. In this case they will receive the information like the target. They could at the end make a good report of the effect of propaganda. Also included in this method are press reports or the speeches and other notions of the affected leaders or representatives. Where printed or telecommunication media are used, their readership or listenership figures can also be obtained.

**Experiment:** Experiments can be carried out by examining the result of two variables dependent and independent variables or controlled and uncontrolled variables. In others words, one variable is exposed to propaganda while the other is not. At the end of the day, the result is obtained which will tell whether propaganda worked in a certain place or not.

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