

PROPAGANDA USAGE IN MODERN DAY JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

Propaganda, an effective tool for propagation of faith and truth has been turned into an effective means through which politicians breach the constitutional rights of the masses and later back it up with a slogan "shi haraa ya" meaning "leave the power for us". The paper therefore, focused on finding out how propaganda is being used by politicians; the implications of using propaganda in a wrong way by politicians and some of the advantages of using propaganda in propagation of the truth to achieve positive goal that will be beneficial to the society. The paper also recognized the inherent potentials of the different media of communication and the various ways they can be used to propagate positive messages or ideas to their subject. Finally, it recommended that journalists should take it up as a big challenge to educate politicians and the masses more on the harmful effect of negative propaganda through their publications, seminars and workshops.

Keywords: *Propaganda, modern, journalism, usage*

INTRODUCTION

A vital question that always comes to mind when a topic like this is raised is "what is the relationship between the mass media and propaganda as regards objective journalism?" The answer to this question will lead ineluctably to a consideration of what propaganda is - whether it is an objective or subjective phenomenon. A journalist's concern (both in electronics and print media) is basically with presentation of the facts of the event in accordance with the journalistic canon which says that facts are sacred, and a journalist is expected to report without violating their sacredness Ukonu (2005).

The propagandist on the other hand can excuse himself of such injunction in handling the facts as he deliberately slants them to achieve a pre-determined objective. This is the essence of propaganda, a hate word connoting unfair and pernicious competition, just as conflict in the promotion of a cause. The point to note however is that both the journalist and the propagandist use the same raw material (information) in the trade. But whereas the material in the hands of the propagandist is usually painted to satisfy a selfish interest, it is a nonetheless expected to be pure in the hands of journalist in order to give credibility to his story. Be that as it may, Amakiri (2007) says "it is true to say that the imperativeness of national security always introduce propaganda into journalistic practice, this establishing propaganda as a concept in situation report".

Propagand is a "systematic effort or deliberate attempt to manipulate other

people's beliefs, attitudes or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners etc.) Eney Britanica, (1992). However, in the real sense of it, the term propaganda in most of its modern usages apparently derives from the shortened name "the propaganda of the congregation de propaganda fide" (congregation for propagation of the faith), with a standing committee of Cardinals in charge of missionary activities of the Roman Catholic Church since 1622. The standard committee of Cardinals as pronounced by the Catholic Church under the pontifical leadership of Pope Gregory XV to propagate the Catholic faith in the world, was not based on lies, half-truth and deceptions, Nwosu (2004) says that "it was based on truth, at least for which the bible is known (biblical truth)". Subsequently, Pope Urban VII (1623-1644) founded the collage of propaganda to educate the priest and also in 1650; Pope Clement VII instituted the sacred congregation for the propagation of the faith to spread Catholicism in the world over. More so, by the seventeenth century, it was widely recognized that opinion is important, but that steps may be taken to modify it in certain directions, however, in context with the reformation, Bernays (1952) says "that the Church Launched the counter-Reformation". This was accomplished by appeals to opinion, which for the first time were called "propaganda".

In addition, such teacher as Plato and Aristotle, and some Stoics, compiled the rule of rhetoric with two aims not only to make their own arguments more persuasive but also to immunize 'good' citizens against the use of logical fallacies and emotional terms by 'bad' lawyers and demagogues, and to point out the possible dangers of following irrational leaders. The Greek rhetorician did these jobs so well that they have been studied and quoted for over 7,500 years. Aristotle's rhetoric was emphasized in higher education throughout the Middle Ages and even after the Renaissance, and it is often drawn upon today in classes, in public speaking, logic and by many sophisticated propagandist, and counter-propagandists.

PROPAGANDA

The term propaganda is defined in many ways by many scholars. According to Ebo (1997) "propaganda is a means of highlighting, increasing, disseminating or spreading some ideas, beliefs, conviction or opinions in order to gain support for an opinion, creed or belief". She made a point clear that propaganda is not necessarily emotional, and it can be perfectly sincere, but it is a one sided communication, in the sense that very often, whose propaganda we accept depends on whose side we are. More so, Jenkins (2008) says "that Propaganda in its original form was therefore, a clean and powerful strategy for information, communication, education and persuasion". He further adds that it become polluted or bastardized when politicians, some governments and war mongers like Adolf Hitler started using propaganda the wrong way to manipulate people's beliefs, attitude, opinions and actions, Encyclopedia Britannica (1980) adds "using lies, half truth and deceptive techniques. Whereas, Hitler was persuading people that the german race was the only pure race. Otherwise, persuasion and the deliberate attempt to manipulate wouldn't form the basis of his propaganda.

Again, the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences volume 11&12 (2000) define propaganda thus: "the relatively deliberate manipulation by means of

symbols (words, gesture, flags, images, monuments, music etc) of other people's thoughts or actions with respect to beliefs, values and behaviors which these people 'reactors' regards as controversial". However, the definition above shows that the elements of deliberateness and manipulateness distinguish propaganda from merely casual communication or the 'free' exchange of ideas. In addition, Lenin (1929) distinguishes propaganda as "the reasoned use of arguments from philosophy, history and science to influence the educated and reasonable few".

To the Communist world, Harold D. Lasswell has a different view over the Soviet propaganda when Lasswell (1980:538) observes that the aim of Soviet propaganda has been to economize the material cost of world dominance and he further describes political propaganda as "the management of mass communication for power purpose". In related term to the Communist, Berenson and Jonowitz (2004) say "that Communist propaganda is formidable because it combines crusading zeal with professional skills ". They further revealed that it is clear, however, that in our era of super-weapons, the Soviet Communists prefer more than ever before to achieve their ends by persuasion rather than by force, and that they share to a high degree, the fear of the consequences of nuclear war which so large in the policy calculations of Washington and London. Then, according to the Leninists theory of opinion formation, Berenson and Jonowitz (2004) state that "a few intelligent and dedicated individuals drawn from all Social Classes could be converted by means of propaganda to correct Marxist or Marxist-Leninist point of view, and eventually some of these individuals might become fully party leaders". Meanwhile, propaganda is a systematic style of disseminating or spreading information, idea and belief to manipulate people's opinion, attitude either for general interest or selfish interest.

PROPAGANDA DEVICES AVAILABLE FOR JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS

People engaged in propaganda have ways of putting across their message and convincing their subjects. Bird and Merwin (2006) in their volume, identifies these ways as the seven common devices of propaganda. They include: Name-calling: a situation whereby a person, an issue or a programme could be called name which will block their acceptability because listeners have little or no time to examine the object properly and it matters so much how it is presented to them, for most people, a name is a major verdict. Give a bad name to a person or thing and he or she stands damaged, as the popular proverb says, "give a dog a bad name to hang it"

The Glittering Generalities: It is a device to make us accept and approve without examining the evidence leveled against such an action or a person. This can also be obtained when the propagandist associates an idea with something acceptable in the people's believe system. The audience is not given the chance to examine the issue properly, but he is dribbled into seeing as enjoying consonance with the prevailing values and ideas.

The Testimonial: This is a device to make us accept anything from a person or persons we love as the right thing, and that from a person or persons we hate or dislike as a wrong thing. In other words, when an issue or point appears too small or imperfect to commend it, it is given a testimonial coverage and made to trail into acceptance with someone or idea already accepted.

The Transfer: it is a device by which the propagandist carries over the authority sanction and prestige of something we respect and revere to something he would have us accept. In this device, the propagandist's urging of people to action can transfer and elevate their minds to so common value which they so respect and bold as center. Such can fire them and sustain them. Religious patriotism offers the best area of discussion.

Plain Folks: This is a device used by politicians to win our confidence by appearing to be like us. In other words, the propagandist identifies himself with the people, with the masses so as to carry them along with him.

Card Stacking: this is a device in which the propagandist employs all the arts of deception to win our support for himself, his group, nation etc. In other words, it is selecting and amassing facts about something or someone in order to present it or him in the good or bad light.

The Band Wagon: it is a device to make people follow the crowd to accept the propagandist programme en-masse. In this device, the propagandist urges his subjects to follow suite and conform to be like others and be happy. He who hesitates to live on the band wagon is told that the people already astride the vehicle are like him, they want the same thing.

USES OF PROPAGANDA BY POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS

The seven common devices of propaganda, definitions and meaning of propaganda by so many scholars and experts, forms the bedrock for our discussion on Propaganda Usage in Nigeria News Media. We should also bear in mind that propaganda is the rational use of argument as well as sound emotional appeals to influence behavior or thought either for good or for bad. Most programs on television, radio and other electronic media are examples of positive propaganda. Positive propaganda has been used to campaign against the following: drunk-driving, drug addiction, child trafficking and prostitution.

Propaganda can as well be used to achieve a selfish interest, for instance, there was a publication in *THIS DAY NEWSPAPER, May 5, 2003, p.9* by the Second Republic Senate Leader, Dr. Olusola Saraki against his former party ANPP. He says "ANPP, Dishonest, Insincere...". This Saraki was a major financier and co-founder of All Nigeria Peoples Party before he joined the ruling party under which his son Dr. Bukola Saraki was "selected" as the Governor in Kwara State. Because of Dr. Olusola's status in Kwara State, many of his followers in ANPP rejected and condemn the party ANPP without examining the evidence leveled against the party. Dr. Olusola Saraki used name calling as a propaganda device to win people over to his side.

Again, the 2004 indictment against both President George W. Bush of America and his counterpart, President Tony Blair of Britain on their persuasive roles during the Gulf war, has brought to fore once more with the use of negative propaganda. During the time of the former United State president, George W. Bush, in his February 2004, edition on the State of Union address, alluded to the fact that Saddam Hussein had acquired URANIUM from Chad in his bid to build more weapons of mass destruction. He hinged his statement on the report credited to President Tony Blair

of Britain and that of FBI. Now, months after the execution of the war, the allegation against President Saddam Hussein has been proved to be false. Now that no weapon of mass destruction has been found in Iraq, the United State former president George Bush is being called upon by the American Congress to defend himself. He had argued that he acted on the information supplied to him by the Intelligent Department of the FBI and CIA who themselves seem to be passing the buck to the British Intelligent. However, the bottom line is that and may only have been used just as propaganda.

Here, Mr President W. Bush employed the arts of deception to win the support of his soldiers in order to achieve his selfish interest by waging war against the weaker country Iraq, because of the their Oil that he (Bush) wanted to control. Card stacking device of propaganda is used. More so, during the regime of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, in his acceptance speech for the second term, according to the Monitor Newspaper of April 29, (2004)he said: "...I must particularly mention consistency and enthusiasm of our women and youths in the democratic process... I thank our Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters who embarked on ceaseless prayers for peaceful conduct of the election... I must not let you down in this my second term in office..." The above speech from Mr. President was made before May 29 swearing in ceremony, just three weeks after May 29, there was a hike in fuel pump price beyond the reach of the poor masses that he promised he will never disappoint.

Here, Mr. President created a smoke-screen of clamor of raising a new issue when he wanted embarrassing matter (his illegal way of occupying the presidential seat) forgotten. In short, President Obasanjo stacked the cards against the truth by giving empty promises just to achieve his selfish interest. Another use of propaganda by politicians manifested in the SUN Newspaper, (Saturday May 10, 2003, 38), when a chieftain of the Northern Socio-Cultural Group, the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and Secretary of the Arewa Unity Committee, Alhaji Mohammed Abdurrahman said the nation against Buhari Presidency, he cautioned, "Buhari Presidency, a repeat of Abacha Orgy". However, to many Nigerians, Abacha remains the worse head of State Nigeria has ever produced. Alhaji Mohammed either because of party differences or personal hatred wanted to condemn Buhari presidency by comp aring him (Buhari) to Abacha, just for people to have deep hatred of him. Meanwhile, according to the summary of Testimonial as a propaganda device, whenever one hates somebody whatever he does is bad and once love is there, whatever he does is right. Also, taking a look at the use of propaganda by politicians, Berelson and Janowitz (1999) state that "public suspicion of information as nothing but propaganda is especially strong when the information comes from the government". Based on the above assertion, the Labour Union regarded the Federal Government's 12.5 percent pay increase promise as a mere propaganda and in Vanguard May 1, 2003, p.3, Labour Union asked this question "...will President Olusegun Obasanjo pay 12.5 percent increase before May 29? The question answered itself because, May 29 of that year has come and gone, while many months salary arrears of workers have not been paid let alone the pay increase.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this paper, we have carefully traced the origin of the word 'propaganda' from so many angles, the meanings and definitions of propaganda from so many scholars and experts, the common devices of propaganda which contributed immensely to our understanding and uses of propaganda and finally, how propaganda was used by Nigerian politicians and some world leaders to achieve either their selfish interests or the general interest.

Propaganda is a very good communication tool but the way it is being used makes it look awkward because if Nigerians could condemn evil no matter whose horse is gored, we will be able to save the face of our Nigeria society that is drumming with and drowning in, wallowing and wasting in what Bishop Francis Okobo of Nsukka Diocese, in a seminar for the Laity described as "outrageous, notorious and sophisticated criminality".

Upon all the bloodshed, property worth billions of naira wasted, abuse of human rights and many other un-lawful attitudes witnessed during the elections, the result we got from Abuja says "Nigeria Elections, free and fair". This is the type of propaganda Iyideobi (2007) described as "...more agonizing... That at the end of the day after a thorough-going, blatant and barefaced brutalization, bastardization and bestalization of God's own people, then in sedimentious layers of lies and falsehood trumped up as the gospel truth and neatly packaged, presented, proclaimed and propagated in piles of profile but porous propaganda".

It is a well known fact that propaganda in a great measure influences reporting and news control which in public relations parlance is termed truth management, journalists therefore, should be more up and doing in the discharge of their objective duties in order not to fall prey to the propagandist. Finally, It is recommend that Nigerian Journalists should take it up as a challenge to educate politicians and the masses more on the harmful effect of negative propaganda. This can be achieved through publications, seminars and series of workshops on the topic "Harmful Effect of Negative use of Propaganda".

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