Is it Either Or?
Professional Ideology vs. Corporate-media Constraints

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Abstract
The article critically assesses Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model and its third 'filter', which highlights the reliance of the media on information provided by governments and corporate institutions. Thereby, the relationship between the journalists' professional ideology and corporate-media constraints will be discussed. The text also incorporates critiques of the model. First, after a brief introduction of the main features of the Propaganda Model, the relevance of the third 'filter' will be indicated by arguing that the concept shares many similarities with the indexing theory. Afterwards, the article considers the third 'filter' and its applicability in relation to the British press. In the second part, the emergence of the professional ideology will be elaborated and linked to corporate control of the media. It will be argued that corporate constraints are the dominant determinants of media performance. Although professionalism allows for journalistic independence, it is a flexible construct that can be shaped by the demands of those who own, control and fund the media.

The Propaganda Model

In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988) propose and apply a Propaganda Model which 'constitutes an institutional critique of media performance' (Klaehn, 2002, 157). The model argues that the corporate media system manufactures media output in the sense that political discourses are largely shaped in support of 'government and dominant private interests' (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, 2). As the core element of the Propaganda Model, Herman and Chomsky (ibid., 2) see a set of five interacting and reinforcing news 'filters' through which the news material must pass before printing and which determines media performance.[1]

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[1] For a description see Herman and Chomsky (1988, 3–31).

The first and second 'filters' describe the media's concentration in size/ownership, integration into the corporate market system and links with other institutions of power (ibid., 3–18). As Herman (2000, 105) explains: 'the media comprise numerous independent entities that operate on the basis of common outlooks, incentives and pressures from the market, government and internal organizational forces'. These entities interlock with different institutional sectors through ownership, advertising, management, shared ideologies, working routines and social circles 'effectively circumventing their ability to remain analytically detached from the power structure of society, of which they themselves are an integral part' (Klaehn, 2002, 157–9). David Edwards and David Cromwell (2006, 1) note succinctly that we live in a world:

> … dominated by giant, multinational corporations … the media system reporting on that world is itself made up of giant corporations. Indeed, media entities are often owned by the same giant corporations they are tasked with covering.

Thus, one could expect the media to encourage a culture that protects this corporate power structure 'from the threat of public understanding and participation' (Chomsky, 1989, 14).

The Propaganda Model's third 'filter' stresses the media's reliance on official sources related to the government as well as to other powerful institutions. These ties are established in order to remain a stable and 'reliable flow of the raw material of news' (Herman and Chomsky 1988, 18–25). Economic and ideological constraints force media personnel to concentrate on these beats, which are essential to supply the daily demand for fresh news and information. Hence, over time, the journalists' dependency on these sources grows because they deliver the essential ingredients of their reporting. Elite sources tend to be seen as more credible due to their 'status and prestige' in society. Following other, less credible sources may as well enhance the costs of research and fact-checking, in particular if media organizations anticipate 'criticism of bias and the threat of libel suits' (ibid., 18–19).

Herman and Chomsky (ibid., 19–22) also point to the ability of the corporate community and state institutions to produce massive PR campaigns which by far exceed the resources that can be spend by the cumulative effort of non-governmental or grassroots organizations and are often used by the media for their cost effectiveness. In sum:

> … the large bureaucracies of the powerful *subsidise* the mass media, and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing, news. (ibid., 22)[2]

Finally, the Propaganda Model incorporates *flak* and 'anti-communism'. *Flak* campaigns can generally be described as a 'negative response to a media statement or program' (ibid., 26). *Flak* puts pressure on media organizations to abide by or follow a specific agenda. The impact of *flak* is usually related to the power of the originator. Due to their economic might, governments, corporations and state-corporate sponsored think-tanks are the dominant providers of *flak* (ibid., 26–8).

The ideology of 'anti-communism', as Herman and Chomsky (ibid., 29–32) argue, has been used to mobilize the population against those who threaten US state-corporate interests. For instance, the media has often adopted 'anti-communist' rhetoric in order to gain support in favour of foreign interventions or to weaken domestic working-class organization (ibid.). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union 'anti-communism' has declined but an ideological belief in the market has been reinforcing this 'filter': Herman (2000, 109) suggests that political developments in support of markets 'are assumed to be benevolent' whereas 'non-market mechanisms are suspect' (ibid.). Moreover, after 9/11, the 'war on terrorism', sometimes accompanied by 'a liberal "humanitarian" discourse', has become a new and powerful notion to frame and understand political events (Robinson, 2004, 107).

Generally, the 'filters' illuminate the 'basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns'; they define news worthy items and set the parameters of discourse (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, 2). Journalists work under these constraints mostly with integrity and commitment, and formally adhere to professional news values, because 'the operation of these filters occurs so naturally … that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable' (ibid.).

But why are propaganda campaigns necessary in democratic societies and how do they occur? Herman and Chomsky argue that it is the media's

> … function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda. (1988, 1)

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[2] Herman and Chomsky also point to the media's use of experts who could provide 'dissident views' but, for various reasons, 'regularly echo the official' line (1988, 23–4).

Propaganda campaigns specifically develop as a result of 'elite–mass gaps' (Ben Page cited in Herman, 2000, 102), when both parties, the corporate elite and the media, are united on an issue but the public takes a different position or disagrees (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, 171–2). In such cases, the model 'predicts that media will exemplify tendencies towards ideological closure and … media coverage will be aligned with elite interests' (Klaehn, 2002, 165). But the Propaganda Model does not rule out critique. To the contrary, the model argues that there is a 'spectrum of opinion allowed expression' which 'is bounded by the consensus of powerful elites while encouraging tactical debate within it' (Chomsky, 1989, 59).

Hence, the media may even take 'an "adversarial stance" with regards to those holding office' when elites are not satisfied with specific policies or are in conflict over certain issues (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, 171). But such criticism is highly limited and tends to be concerned with 'tactics' and 'costs' rather than addressing fundamental questions like the nature of US foreign policy, the class structure of society or corporate hegemony (ibid., 172; Klaehn, 2002, 166–7). This may be so because, as Jeffery Klaehn writes, the Propaganda Model:

> … hypothesizes that contradictions and divergent interests within and between the ruling bloc are eclipsed by the common goals and overlapping institutional interests/objectives shared among what arguably constitutes a unified ruling class.(2002, 165)[3]

The propaganda function[4] of the media seems to manifest in different ways: first, by keeping discussions within parameters of acceptable debates, thus reinforcing the system; second, through a dichotomized treatment of comparable events in

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[3] Previous elaborations incorporated the model's 'first-order predictions about how the media function' (Chomsky, 1989, 153). The Propaganda Model also makes 'second-order predictions about how media performance will be discussed and evaluated' and 'third-order predictions about the reactions to studies of media performance' (ibid., 153).

[4] According to Thymian Bussemer (2005, 29–30, translations by the author), who carried out a systematic analysis of the historic development of propaganda studies and synthesized the numerous definitions of this term existent in the social sciences, propaganda can be understood 'as normally media mediated forming of action relevant opinions and attitudes of political or social groups through symbolic communication and as manufacturing of public in support of particular interests'. Bussemer also identifies five conceptualizations of propaganda which were used in different theory contexts (ibid., 33). He describes one concept as 'propaganda as primary agency of integration of the society' (ibid., 34):

> Here, propaganda is understood as a device to manufacture social coherence, which can both be systematically operated by central agencies of the society (such as perhaps the educational system) but can also come as a spontaneous and unconscious diffusion of ideology from the members of a society. (ibid.)

Such definitions and concepts of propaganda include the distribution of institutionalized propaganda and do not imply intentional behaviour by agents. Both seem to be in accord with the concept of media mediated propaganda that Herman and Chomsky suggest. Nevertheless, it might be worth further theorizing the different manifestations of media mediated propaganda.

'friendly' and 'enemy' states which is highly favourable to the interests of domestic elites and, third, through the engagement in propaganda campaigns.[5]

The Third 'Filter' of the Propaganda Model and Media and Communication Studies

Critics of the Propaganda Model have several objections concerning a propaganda function of the media related to the media's corporate integration and to the journalists' dependence on establishment sources. Simon Cottle (2006, 18) criticizes the Propaganda Model because: 'studies have also demonstrated a more complex and often decidedly less cosy relationship between media and powerful sources'. For instance, during public crises, unexpected changes in dominant patterns of source selection may occur (ibid.). Furthermore, Cottle (ibid.) points out that:

> there is often more complexity and contingency in the interactions, in the play of power, between sources and media and how theses unfold through time than the propaganda model predicts.

Colin Sparks (2007, 78) argues that, especially in a 'capitalist democracy where the political spectrum is wider than in the USA', competing political sources might be 'highly critical of governmental, or even elite, perspectives' (ibid.).[6] Finally, Daniel C. Hallin (1994, 13) reflects on the causes for problematic media behaviour. He sees the professional journalistic 'ideology … [a]s central to understanding the way the media operate' and not corporate-market constraints as proposed by the Propaganda Model.

Generally, researchers have pointed to the close connection between the media and the government as a result of the working routines of professional journalism, which tend to limit the range of possible discussion to policy alternatives debated by governments (e.g. Allan, 2004; Bennett, 1990; Bennett et al., 2007; Hallin, 1989; Keeble, 2006; Mermin, 1999; Schudson, 1978).

But Cottle (2000, 427) stresses that a critical theory approach, like that of Herman and Chomsky, argues that news media 'routinely … privilege the voices of the

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[5] Studies have provided extensive empirical evidence supporting the Propaganda Model's hypotheses: see e.g. Herman and Chomsky (1988; 2008); Chomsky (1989); Hammond and Herman (2000); Klaehn (2005); Edwards and Cromwell (2006); Winter (1997; 2007). For critical discussions on the Propaganda Model see e.g. Rai (1995); Herman (2000); Klaehn (2002; 2003); Boyd-Barrett (2004); Cottle (2006); Sparks (2007).

[6] Other researchers claim that technological developments had a significant impact on media–state relations (see Robinson, 2004). But according to Robinson (ibid., 108) 'it seems likely that any empowering effects of new media technology may well have been counteracted by reinforced government media management strategies'.

powerful and marginalizes those of the powerless' with 'ideological effects'. Cottle (ibid., 428) thus further suggests that it is a 'theoretically absolute' approach. In contrast, Cottle (ibid.) identifies 'more political[ly] contingent' approaches, which 'point to the dynamic processes surrounding news access' like 'the "indexing" of news access to the changing political consensus', an approach which has been elaborated by researchers such as Hallin and W. Lance Bennett (ibid.) and further expanded by Robert M. Entman (see Entman, 2004, 5).

As Bennett (1990: 106) writes, professional journalism 'tend[s] to "index" the range of voices and viewpoints … according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate' (see also Bennett et al., 2007, 75). Thereby, the media reflects consensuses and conflicts about certain policy initiatives as discussed by political elites, is highly reactive to government spin (ibid., 49) and easy to manipulate by officials (Hallin, 1989, 25).

But what are the main differences and similarities between the indexing and Propaganda Model approaches? According to Eric Herring and Piers Robinson (2003), main differences could be found in the conclusions. Indexing theorists see 'the media in serving … merely political elite interests' and not 'corporate elite interests in the shaping of coverage' (ibid., 555). Furthermore, they are not 'questioning the legitimacy of US foreign policy' (ibid.). In contrast, Herman and Chomsky focus on both: corporate elite interests and the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of US foreign policy. Besides these differences, Herring and Robinson (ibid., 556) indicate that both approaches share many similarities:

> Hallin's central finding in *The 'Uncensored War'* is that media coverage initially reflected the consensus among the US political elite and then reflected the debates within it when it was divided over whether or not the war could be won at a cost it was prepared to pay.… Hallin concludes, consistent with Herman and Chomsky, that the US media rarely produce coverage deviating from the range of views expressed in Washington. (ibid., 557)

Hallin sees 'objective' journalism as a major factor behind journalists' deference to the US political elite (ibid.). Similarly, Bennett's 'indexing norm' refers 'to the journalistic routine of relying upon political elites when defining and framing the news agenda' (ibid.). According to Herring and Robinson (ibid.) Bennett:

> concentrates on what is effectively the sourcing filter of the propaganda model in maintaining that journalists fall back on the vast volume of public relations material disseminated by government in order to generate a steady and rapid supply of stories.

Finally, Herring and Robinson point to numerous 'significant academic works on the media and US foreign policy (studies by Jonathan Mermin; John Zaller and

Dennis Chui; Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus; Scott Althaus et al.; Mikhail Alexseev and Bennett; Philip Powlick and Andrew Katz)' (ibid., 558) that 'all attempt to either draw upon or refine Bennett's indexing hypothesis' and, significantly, 'demonstrate the general tendency of news coverage to fit within the boundaries of elite debate' (ibid., 559).

Hence, it seems inappropriate to place emphasis on the indexing approach and dismiss Herman and Chomsky's. If the one is 'theoretically absolute' than so is the other because both are based on similar assumptions concerning the uneven use of sources. Both also demonstrate the media's tendency to reflect elite discourses at the expense of the public. Besides, the indexing theory appears to be rather limited because it is blind towards the corporate power structure and its links with and influences on governments and media. On the other hand, indexing can better explain variations in coverage. Finally, it might be fair to say that the Propaganda Model's third 'filter' is rather verified by the results of the studies on coverage of US foreign policy which use the indexing approach.

Affirming the Third 'Filter': Perspectives in and Structures of the UK Press
Although the indexing theory was, for the most part, applied in an US context, evidence suggests that it is also relevant for an analysis of the British press. Then, again, the same should apply for the Propaganda Model and its third 'filter'. An example is the UK press coverage of the Iraq War and the build-up to it. A six-day study of the war build-up by Nick Couldry and John Downey (2004, 277) demonstrates how the UK press mirrored the official UK-US position:

> The broad UK/USA policy framework (that the war was 'to disarm' Iraq) and its inherent military momentum (in relation to which the UN inspections were merely a 'delay') was naturalized right across the British press. (ibid.)

About sourcing, the researchers wrote: 'All newspapers reproduced extensive quotations from official speeches by US and UK politicians, the obvious "primary definers" in the build-up to war' (ibid., 275). Later, during the main conflict period, media heavily relied on official sources. A survey by researchers at the universities of Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds (Robinson et al., 2006) found that: 'Coalition officials had most access to news outlets, being mentioned in more than 80 per cent of television and newspaper reports.'[7] The survey concluded:

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[7] Studies by Howard Tumber and Jerry Palmer (2004, 103) and Justin Lewis et al. (2006, 119–20) also demonstrate the dominance of US/UK government and military sources in the British mainstream media during the Iraq War.

> Coverage mainly served to reinforce official justifications for war.… The tendency was for news media to accept the official position and this enabled the coalition's moral case for the war to go by default. (ibid.)

It might be worth mentioning that not all UK newspapers supported a military attack on Iraq, and some featured substantial criticism (see Tumber and Palmer, 2004, 86–9). Particularly during the build-up, 'elite media and political discourse concerning the waging of a war against Iraq in the UK was deeply divided' (Couldry and Downey, 2004, 280). This representation largely 'shifted to being pro-war' when military action started (ibid.). From the point of the indexing theory and the Propaganda Model this kind of media behaviour was inevitable because the 'war option' attracted a significant degree of opposition from political-economic elites. This was in contrast to the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 NATO onslaught on Serbia and the 2001 attacks on Afghanistan, when Fleet Street's news coverage largely backed Western military aggression[8] (Keeble, 2004, 51).

A global analysis of UK press coverage further demonstrates that press perspectives are shaped in accord with elite interests. James Curran and Jean Seaton note the following:

> The national press generally endorsed the basic tenets of the capitalist system – private enterprise, profit, the 'free market' and the rights of property ownership. By frequently invoking the consensual framework of the national interest and by projecting positive symbols of nationhood … the press fostered a national identity at the expense of class solidarity. The press also reinforced dominant political and social norms.…
> The press built support for the social system in less direct and obvious ways. Its focus on political and state office as the seat of power tended to mask the central influence of economic élites and global markets in shaping public policy. By regularly reporting political and economic news as disconnected events, it encouraged acceptance of the power structure as natural, part of the way things are. (2003, 103)

This conclusion also affirms what Chomsky (1997) defines as the null hypothesis about the nature of media products in our current system:

> The obvious assumption is that the product of the media, what appears, what doesn't appear, the way it is slanted, will reflect the interest of the buyers [i.e.

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[8] The term 'military aggression' seems to be appropriate for the 1991 Gulf War because the US refused to engage in any diplomatic settlement of the crisis by subverting an Arab resolution effort and rejecting 'at least five diplomatic approaches' by Iraq. Moreover, the US's disproportional use of force was arguably not in accord with international law and the UN mandate (Herman, 1995, 209–11). The term is also appropriate for the 1999 NATO bombings of Serbia, the 2001 attacks on Afghanistan and the 2003 attack on Iraq because all these wars were illegal under international law (for a discussion see Mandel, 2005).

advertising industry] and sellers, the institutions, and the power systems that are around them. If that wouldn't happen, it would be kind of a miracle.

In spite of that, Cottle (2006, 18) has identified changes in pattern of source selection and perspectives in the media which might break up common pattern of coverage. But the question remains whether such changes do challenge the dominant relations in society? Take, for instance, the emergence and integration of new gender and ethnic identities in media coverage after the Second World War. As Jean K. Chalaby (1998, 76) comments:

> [I]n the media women and members of ethnic minorities are welcome to occupy new roles and swap existing roles and occupations with others, but are not encouraged to create altogether new roles or even to change or redefine the roles they newly occupy. In sum, it could be that the long-term effect of the political arbitrariness of the media discourse has been to deconstruct social and political identities hostile to capitalism and to contribute to the formation of identities that may be distinct from each other but rather integrative 'with regard to the dominant economic order.

Next to this discussion on sourcing and dominant media perspectives, structural changes in the economic and media systems further strengthen the third 'filter's' importance. These concern the global expansion of transnational corporations (i.e. 'globalization') and its effect on the media (see Herman and McChesney, 1996). As part of this development, Bob Franklin (1997, 82–114) chronicles a radical changing political economy of the British press since the Second World War, featuring increasing concentration of ownership – the integration of national and local newspapers into cross-media, multinational corporations. In addition, there was a decline in newspaper circulation and growing shareholder pressures on businesses to raise profits, both of which heightened competition and led to the downsizing of news rooms. These kinds of pressures are restricting journalists' leeway and have severe consequences for news-gathering and reporting practices leading to a process of tabloidization (see also Davies, 2008).

The economic transformation was accompanied by a sharp increase in propaganda (i.e. PR and public diplomacy) (see Davis, 2002; Miller, 2004; Miller and Dinan, 2000). Between 1979 and 1998 the PR consultancy sector in Britain expanded by a factor of 31, an 11-fold increase in real terms. The rise of PR was closely related to the deregulation and 'free market' campaigns of the early 1980s that were attacks on working-class supportive legislation (Miller and Dinan, 2000, 10–14). David Miller and William Dinan (ibid., 29) argue that 'the PR consultancy industry in Britain has acted largely for business interests and has had a key role in ensuring the success of particular types of business activity'. They see the expansion of PR as a result of 'a political and economic change of direction in government, in the context of the rise of global power of TNCs', whereas 'a key role of the PR

industry in late 20th century Britain … was to make profits from, and facilitate, the market redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich' (ibid.).

The US and UK governments also spend huge sums on PR, which they euphemistically label as public diplomacy: in the UK, the Foreign Office spends about £340 million annually for operations in London. The US State Department invests at least $1 billion in order to shape opinions overseas, whereas the Pentagon has its own propaganda apparatus (Miller, 2004, 80). According to Miller:

> … [t]he overall cost of the propaganda campaigns to justify the 'war on terror' and the attack on Afghanistan and Iraq is a secret, but it must run into billions of dollars in the US and hundreds of millions of pounds in the UK. (ibid.)

These developments are part of a new propaganda strategy that is subsumed under the headline of 'perception management', which is a milder term for 'thought control', as Mark Curtis (2004, 101) notes. The strategy is adapted from the US and is in particular applied during times of war. It comprises the 'incorporating, gathering, processing and deploying [of] information via computers, intelligence and military command and control systems', and operations directed towards the media such as the establishment of embedding systems, as well as traditional activities like 'grey' and 'black' propaganda. Moreover, another significant aspect of this strategy is the systematic manipulation of the media by secret intelligence agencies (ibid., 102–5). As was pointed out by the British Foreign Office, the government needs an 'overarching public diplomacy strategy' to deliver 'the core messages that we wish to put across to our targeted audiences' at home and abroad (cited in ibid., 103). According to Miller, actions like these are motivated by a 'philosophy of total propaganda control' (cited in ibid., 102).

PR has nested into news media coverage. Justin Lewis et al. (2008) examined the 'top end' of British journalism (*Guardian*, *Independent*, *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, BBC and ITV) to investigate news room reliance on pre-packaged news material during two weeks of domestic coverage (ibid., 3). The evidence for PR penetration into the news was overwhelming:

> Overall then, the study verified that at least *41 per cent of press articles and 52 per cent of broadcast news items contain PR materials which play an agenda-setting role or where PR material makes up the bulk of the story …* (ibid., 10)

Considering the origins of PR in the press, 38 percent originated from the business/corporate sector, 23 percent from public body, 21 percent from the government and 11 percent from NGOs/charities, 5 percent from professional associations and 2 percent from citizen(s) (ibid., 12).

This further suggests the relevance of the third 'filter' of the Propaganda Model: structural changes in the media system enhanced competition among and the downsizing of news organizations, leading to pressures on journalists who increasingly have to rely on official proclamations in the news-gathering process. In the latter domain, resources of state-corporate institutions by far exceed the means of other actors. Hence, the third 'filter's' underlying economic assumptions seem to be confirmed.

Yet, while the third 'filter' seems to perform well during an analysis of US/UK coverage of foreign policy, military conflicts and corporate affairs, it has to be further demonstrated if this is also the case when analysing other aspects of coverage or media performance in different countries. Moreover, there has to be a theorization of what kind of public crises bring about changes in pattern of source selection, and why, in certain instances, the British press provided more space for substantial criticism of US/UK military aggression than the US press (see Sparks, 2007, 72).

Professional Journalism and Corporate Media Control: Conflicting or Converging Moments?

The most important norm of the professional ideology of journalism is the 'objectivity' norm, which emerged along other norms such as balance, neutrality, fairness, accuracy and the separation of fact from opinion (Chalaby, 1998, 130; Keeble, 2006, 28). Generally, professionalism has been identified as a liberating moment because it enhanced freedom from pressures from advertisers, owners and political parties. Moreover, journalism could grow as an independent profession with universal codes, ethical standards and organizing structures that strengthened the craft (e.g. Allan, 2004; Keeble, 2005; McChesney, 2004; Schudson, 1978).

Nevertheless, professional journalism and norms such as 'objectivity' have been challenged because of their supposed system-reinforcing function. It is argued that journalists use uneven sourcing strategies in favour of establishment sources, tend to emphasize facts and official statements at the expense of contextualization, and largely transmit the values favoured by advertisers and big business (e.g. Keeble, 2006, 28; McChesney, 2004, 67–77; Schudson, 1978, 160ff.).

Especially in coverage of foreign policy, the reliance on official sources gains cumulative weight because state-economic interests are largely integrated. As Robert W. McChesney (2002, 95) comments:

In matters of international politics, 'official sources' are almost interchangeable with the term 'elites,' as foreign policy is mostly a preserve of the wealthy and powerful few – C. Wright Mills' classic power elite.[9]

Moreover, when it comes to the coverage of military aggression and state-terrorism, 'objective' reporting is highly questionable because violators of international law should not get equal space for comment (see Zollmann, 2007). The same might apply to asymmetric conflicts in which military force is disparate and disproportionately used. Accordingly, Robert Fisk (cited in Podur, 2005) commented on the relevance of professional norms:

> [I]f you're dealing with a dispute about a highway, public or private property for an airport, it is essential to give protesters equal time with those who want to open a new airport. In a court case, it's essential to give equal time to the defense and the prosecution …
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> But in foreign affairs, in a part of the world that is cloaked in injustice, where thousands are torn apart and shredded by weapons every year, you're entering a new kind of world. One in which the standards of neutrality used in a small-town court case fall by the wayside because they are no longer relevant.
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> When you see child victims piled up at the site of a massacre it's not the time to give equal time to the murderers. If you were covering the slave trade in the 19th century, you wouldn't give 50 per cent to the slave ship captain; you would focus on the slaves who died and on the survivors. If you are present at the liberation of an extermination camp in Nazi Germany, you don't search out the SS for 50 per cent of the comment.

These examples illustrate that the use of 'objectivity' and balance (i.e. equal time) ideally have to be considered carefully and used in a variable fashion highly dependent on individual cases. As studies have shown, this does not take place in present-day journalism, where perpetrators of an illegal war can become 'primary definers' of news.[10] Nevertheless, professional norms do not encourage bias *per se*. Hence, it seems likely that corporate-media constraints have some influence here. Given journalism's tendency to be biased in favour of dominant political-economic elites, the question remains whether professionalism is the main problem, as argued by researchers such as Hallin and Bennett, or corporate-market constraints as proposed by the political economy perspective of the Propaganda Model?

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[9] The same might apply to the UK (see Curtis, 2003).

[10] In May 2004, the *New York Times* apologized to its readers in an editorial for parts of its coverage on Saddam's alleged WMDs, which had almost unquestioningly followed the pronouncements of government officials and Iraqi defectors (see Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 438, 440). But this seemingly happened without serious questioning of the *Times'* news-gathering practices, which include a steady reliance on official sources. Consequently, the *Times* reported on an alleged Iranian nuclear weapons threat, as claimed by the US government, thus again serving the administration's propaganda efforts (Herman and Chomsky, 2008: 296–301).

In order to answer this question it might first be worth tracing the relationship between professionalism and corporate influences because they share some intersections. Evidence suggests that the institutionalization of a professional ideology was encouraged by corporate owners in order to weaken the labour movement. As Hallin (1994, 28) comments:

> Objectivity was stressed by editors and publishers during the 1930s for instance, when the Newspaper Guild was strong and relatively political, and there was concern reporters would slant the news toward the interests of labor.

Similarly, Herman argues that professionalism grew when media concentration was on the rise and businesses became increasingly dependent on advertising; it was thus 'not an antagonistic movement by the workers against the press owners, but was actively encouraged by many of the latter' (Herman, 2000, 106). Consistently, Martin Conboy (2004, 110) stresses that journalism's function as a fourth estate is contingent on the professional ideology, whereas the institutionalization of journalism has been accompanied by its integration into the political and economic status quo. It is a 'history of increasing restriction rather than liberalization, as journalism comes closer to those centres of power and influence which, in turn, give it their seal of approval' (ibid.).[11]

Accompanying the rise of professionalism was the press's increasing dependency on advertising, which led to the collapse of the working-class-newspapers. According to Curran (2002, 86), the radical working-class press of the early and mid nineteenth century 'helped to undermine normative support for the social order by challenging the legitimacy of the political and economic institutions on which it was based'. Being able to remain self-sufficient through reliance on the readership market, its circulation exceeded that of the 'respectable newspaper press' (ibid., 83). But with the press's integration into the advertising-dependent corporate-market system, after the repeal of advertising duty in 1853, the situation fundamentally changed. Curran (ibid., 96) describes, how the economic structure of press publishing was affected:

> All national newspapers in the mass market cost more to produce and distribute than the net price at which they were sold. Advertisers acquired a *de facto* licensing authority since, without their support, newspapers ceased to be economically viable.

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[11] Of course, it has to be considered that the professionalization of journalism in the US and UK, although sharing many similarities, cannot be seen as equal developments and manifestations. Despite the fact that researchers identify a 'liberal model' of media systems (including the US and UK) which has a relatively equal degree of professionalism (see Hallin and Mancini 2005) other research suggests that the 'objectivity' norm is less considered in the UK than in the US (see Hampton 2008).

In what followed, radical newspapers had to adjust to advertising pressures in order to survive in the market. That meant a redefinition of target audiences, up-market orientation and political conformity. In the end, the press came under control of 'capitalist entrepreneurs', while the radical press was either dismantled by or absorbed into the new system (ibid., 103). Thus, '[m]arket forces succeeded where legal repression had failed in establishing the press as an instrument of social control' (ibid., 81). Moreover, and without political turmoil, corporate control severely limited the range of political debate in the press.

This evaluation further demonstrates why professionalization made sense: with the corporate integration, the press had to appear neutral because it could not overtly support their owners and corporate funders as in the partisan tradition. Richard Keeble (2005, 272) reflects on this as follows:

> It could, then, be argued that objectivity … was part of a strategic ritual to legitimize the activities of the mainstream media. At root, beyond the rhetoric of 'public interest', 'democracy' and 'press freedom', the 'objectivity' myth promotes the interests of the economic and political elites.

The discussion suggests that corporate control and professional journalism are not antagonistic moments; they can rather be seen as two sides of the same coin. Although professionalism grants autonomy to journalists, commercial market barriers and constraints, as well as a problematic realization of professional norms, limited the range of permissible debate in the press.

Corporate Media and the Assault on Journalistic Autonomy

Furthermore, as Herman (2000, 106) suggests, 'professionalism and objectivity rules are fuzzy and flexible concepts and are not likely to override the claims and demands of deeper power and control relationships'. Similarly, Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese see news routines and organizational interests as the responsibility of owners because 'media owners or their appointed top executives have the final say in what the organization does' (cited in Hackett and Uzelman, 2003, 333).

Studies support the assumption that corporate interests influence journalists, despite professionalism (e.g. Bagdikian, 2004; Curran and Seaton, 2003; Edwards and Cromwell, 2006; Gall, 1997; Hackett and Uzelman, 2003; Herman, 1995; Klaehn, 2005; Lee and Solomon, 1992; McChesney, 1997; 2003; 2004; Parenti, 1993; Rampton and Stauber, 2001; Winter, 1997; 2007). Corporate influences are traceable on several levels: media workers, working routines, organizational

interests, external pressures and ideology as a product of power relations (Hackett and Uzelman, 2003, 332–4; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

Organizational interests are often executed through owners and managements. According to Brian McNair (2003, 57):

> The main mechanism by which proprietors can exert control is their power to appoint key personnel … who become the proprietor's 'voice' within the newsroom, ensuring that journalistic 'independence' conforms to the preferred editorial line.

Research suggests that interventionist owners and managers are a significant factor in the newspaper industries of the UK. In their analysis of ownership pressures in the press, Curran and Seaton (2003, 101) came to the following conclusion:

> The shift towards a delegated pattern of control in part of the national press during the 1960s and early 1970s was reversed during the later 1970s and 1980s. A new generation of predominantly right-wing proprietors emerged who adopted a more interventionist and personalized style of management. Yet even in those papers where proprietors were relatively inactive, control was still exercised through the selection of senior management and mediated through traditional structures of news-gathering and the influence of dominant political values.

Award winning US-American investigative journalist Gary Webb commented on how such a system, based on dominant political values, can work:

> In seventeen years of doing this, nothing bad had happened to me. I was never fired or threatened with dismissal if I kept looking under rocks. I didn't get any death threats that worried me.… Hell, the system worked just fine, as I could tell. It encouraged enterprise. It rewarded muckracking …
> I wrote some stories that made me realise how sadly misplaced my bliss had been. The reason I'd enjoyed such smooth sailing for so long hadn't been, as I'd assumed, because I was careful and diligent and good at my job. It turned out to have nothing to do with it. The truth was that, in all those years, I hadn't written anything important enough to suppress. (cited in Edwards and Cromwell, 2008a)

Other studies indicate how top-down interferences influence working routines. For instance, James Winter (2007, 45–6) extracted extensive evidence for direct management influences in newsrooms from the sociology of news literature. Examples of direct management control are: 'veto over' stories that 'journalists themselves initiate', dropping of reports or framing of stories 'within a particular angle or perspective', suggesting of 'sources or contacts to interview', proofreading and major editing 'which may mean significant additional changes', deciding of headlines as well as assigning journalists to rewrite their stories or removing the

journalist's by-line if they object to changes and then printing a version of the story that fits with the management's agenda.

Significantly, managers and owners do not only intervene on ideological grounds, they are themselves exposed to economic pressures and may merely interfere upon them (McChesney, 2003, 306).

Influences by advertisers on the press have also been highlighted in academic literature (see e.g. Franklin, 1997, 92–5; Keeble, 2006, 44–5; McNair, 2003, 58–9). There are two forms of commercial news-penetration by advertisers which increased as a result of commercialism and economic downsizing: first, the direct penetration of adverts into media content because of collusion and, second, the media's positive reporting on their own ventures and investments. Besides, businesses might threaten to cancel advertising if a newspapers' political line is violating their interests (Franklin, 1997, 94; McChesney, 2003, 310–11). But there is a more subtle element of advertising control: the crucial power of advertisers is inherent in their position 'to choose among stations and programs' according to their ideological preferences (Herman, 1995, 169).

Tacit pressures force journalists to adjust their writing to commercial interests: a Pew Research Center survey of 300 journalists in 2000 found that about 50 percent of journalists admitted they sometimes consciously censored themselves to serve the commercial interests of their company or advertisers, only 25 percent stated that this would never happen (McChesney, 2003, 310). This is one way in which corporate ideology may flow into journalism. In addition, media conglomerates have interlocking relations with other corporations and groups that may lead to the same effect. Take, for instance, the Guardian Media Group which owns *the Guardian* newspaper. According to Edwards and Cromwell (2008b):

> the Guardian Media Group Board and/or the Scott Trust have links with the corporate media, New Labour, Cadbury Schweppes, KPMG Corporate Finance, the chemicals company Hickson International Plc, Fenner Plc, the investment management company Rathbone Brothers Plc, global investment company Lehman Brothers, global financial services firm Morgan Stanley, the Bank of England …

As Soontae An and Hyun Seung Jin (2004, 579) write, corporate interlocks are a widespread feature of capitalist institutions and 'are established as a means to facilitate inter-firm collusion and cooperation'.

Studies of media performance suggest a tendency of bias in favour of the business industries. In a study summarizing 17 content analyses of Canadian newspapers by the Canadian media monitoring project NewsWatch, Robert A. Hackett and Scott Uzelman came to 'broadly compatible findings' (2003, 342) suggesting the press's

tendency to favour corporate interests. The researchers concluded that newspapers':

> … editorial stance (ultimately determined by ownership) influence their news coverage; and that double standards or patterns of omission related to politics and class tend broadly to be consistent with what one would expect from corporate and commercial pressures. (ibid.)

The comprehensive work of the UK media monitoring organization Media Lens has identified a similar slant of media coverage in the UK (see Edwards and Cromwell, 2006).

Finally, McChesney (2003, 308) sees a 'commercial attack on the professional autonomy of journalism' that can be characterized as a severe 'cutback in resources'. The reduction of resources has been a result of economic policies administered by the large media conglomerates that control the major part of news production. Editorial cutbacks implemented in order to remain competitive and to make short-term profits, had serious consequences for professional news standards: international coverage and public investigative journalism are on the decline (ibid., 307–9; see also Franklin, 1997).

In summary, it could be argued that the press can hardly operate as a 'fourth estate' in order to give 'expression to a richly pluralistic spectrum of information sources', contribute to the society as a 'system of checks and balances' on the powerful and thus 'make democratic control over governing relations possible', as liberal press theories would suggest (Allan, 2004, 47). Rather, the corporate press disables democratic participation:

> [I]t encourages a weak political culture that makes depoliticization, apathy and selfishness rational choices for the citizenry, and it permits the business and commercial interests that actually rule … society to have inordinate influence over media content. (McChesney, 1997, 7)

In other words: corporate media constraints and the execution of professional norms, guided by these constraints, systematically reinforce bias in favour of integrated state-economic interests. Thus, the press fulfils, among its many other functions, a propaganda function as identified by Herman and Chomsky.

Conclusion
The discussion suggests the applicability of the Propaganda Model and its third 'filter' in the US/UK context. The model might be particularly useful in areas of significant societal concern: coverage of foreign policy, war and corporate affairs. This may be the result of similar corporate organization and funding of the media

as well as a comparable execution of professional norms. The collusion of Western imperialism, in which Britain acts 'as junior partner to US global power' (Curtis, 2003, 5), may play a role as well because the ideological obfuscation of imperial policies has produced similar discourses of legitimation: 'anti-communism', the 'war on terror', the hailing of the 'free market' and 'new humanitarianism' (see Achcar, 2007).

That does not mean that the Propaganda Model does not need to be adjusted if applied outside the context of US elite media coverage of US foreign policy. The UK elites, for instance, may still have individual interests over policies, such as foreign intervention in the Middle East, a fact which could have an impact on media coverage. The UK has also specific political and media systems which have to be considered (see for example Sparks, 2007). These issues have also been addressed by Herman (2000, 107–8):

> The propaganda model deals with extraordinarily complex sets of events, and only claims to offer a broad framework of analysis, a first approximation, that requires modification depending on local and special factors, and that may be entirely inapplicable in some cases …

Yet significantly, as Herman (ibid., 108) further stresses, the model 'offers insight in numerous important cases that have large effects and cumulative ideological force' – often incidents (like imperial wars or corporate malfeasances) with severe consequences for people and societies. We have also seen the convincing application of the Propaganda Model in the work provided thus far.

Finally, it might be important to consider that the Propaganda Model emphasizes a set of dynamic, interacting 'filters': if one 'filter', let's say the sourcing 'filter', is weaker, or if coverage over a certain issue becomes more open, *flak*, PR, corporate demands and ideological devices pressure the media to reinforce the dominant agenda. Hence, cases which provide examples of diverse media coverage do not simply refute the validity of the Propaganda Model.

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