



UNIVERSITY OF ARTS, BELGRADE
Faculty of Dramatic Arts

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10 strategies of manipulation

Marina Kovačević

Abstract

Psychological manipulation can be defined as the exercise of undue influence through mental distortion and emotional exploitation, with the intention to seize power, control, benefits, and privileges at the victim's expense.

It is important to distinguish healthy social influence from psychological manipulation. Healthy social influence occurs between most people, and is part of the give and take of constructive relationships. In psychological *manipulation*, one person is used for the benefit of another. The manipulator deliberately creates an imbalance of power, and exploits the victim to serve his or her agenda.

Key words: manipulation, strategy, media

Noam Chomsky - “10 strategies of manipulation” by the media

...There is no real invader here
We are all irish in all our
different kinds of ways
We must not, now or ever in the future,
show anything to each other
except tollerance, forbearance
and neighbourly love...

The propaganda model is a conceptual model in political economy advanced by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky to explain how propaganda and systemic biases function in mass media. The model seeks to explain how populations are manipulated and how consent for economic, social and political policies is "manufactured" in the public mind due to this propaganda.

The theory posits that the way in which news is structured (through advertising, concentration of media ownership, government sourcing and others) creates an inherent conflict of interest which acts as propaganda for undemocratic forces.

Renowned critic and always MIT linguist Noam Chomsky, one of the classic voices of intellectual dissent in the last decade, has compiled a list of the ten most common and effective strategies resorted to by the agendas “hidden” to establish a manipulation of the population through the media. Historically the media have proven highly efficient to mold public opinion. Thanks to the media paraphernalia and propaganda, have been created or destroyed social movements, justified wars, tempered financial crisis, spurred on some other ideological currents, and even given the phenomenon of media as producers of reality within the collective psyche. But how to detect the most common strategies for understanding these psychosocial tools which, surely, we participate? Fortunately Chomsky has been given the task of synthesizing and expose these practices, some more obvious and more sophisticated, but apparently all equally effective and, from a certain point of view, demeaning. Encourage stupidity, promote a sense of guilt, promote distraction, or construct artificial problems and then magically, solve them, are just some of these tactics.

Psychological manipulation is a type of social influence that aims to change the perception or behavior of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. By advancing the interests of the manipulator, often at another's expense, such methods could be considered exploitative, abusive, devious, and deceptive.¹ There are few groups of mental shortcuts that make us vulnerable, and countless variations and combinations of them. People are willing to die for them - and this is not a metaphor. They would go to war, they would take poison, they would choose a career - the one they hate. They may even create a car accident, without realizing that they are repeating a scenario described in the yesterday's newspaper. But mostly they would spend time and money. This is when the knowledge turns into power, because when we know what can be used against us, we have a choice.

One way to detect a manipulator is to see if a person acts with different faces in front of different people and in different situations. While all of us have a degree of this type of social differentiation, some psychological manipulators tend to habitually dwell in extremes, being highly polite to one individual and completely rude to another—or totally helpless one moment and fiercely aggressive the next. When you observe this type of behavior from an individual on a regular basis, keep a healthy distance, and avoid engaging with the person unless you absolutely have to. As mentioned earlier, reasons for chronic psychological manipulation are complex and deep-seated. It is not your job to change or save them.

1. The strategy of distraction

The primary element of social control is the strategy of distraction which is to divert public attention from important issues and changes determined by the political and economic elites, by the technique of flood or flooding continuous distractions and insignificant information. distraction strategy is also essential to prevent the public interest in the essential knowledge in the area of the science, economics, psychology, neurobiology and cybernetics. “Maintaining public attention diverted away from the real social problems, captivated by matters of no real importance. Keep the public busy, busy, busy, no time to think, back to farm and other animals (quote from text *Silent Weapons for Quiet War*).”

2. Create problems, then offer solutions

This method is also called “problem -reaction- solution. “It creates a problem, a “situation” referred to cause some reaction in the audience, so this is the principal of the steps

¹ Social influence is not necessarily negative. For example, doctors can try to persuade patients to change unhealthy habits. Social influence is generally perceived to be harmless when it respects the right of the influenced to accept or reject and is not unduly coercive. Depending on the context and motivations, social influence may constitute underhanded manipulation.

that you want to accept. For example: let it unfold and intensify urban violence, or arrange for bloody attacks in order that the public is the applicant's security laws and policies to the detriment of freedom. Or: create an economic crisis to accept as a necessary evil retreat of social rights and the dismantling of public services.

3. The gradual strategy

acceptance to an unacceptable degree, just apply it gradually, drop by drop, for consecutive years. That is how they radically new socioeconomic conditions (neoliberalism) were imposed during the 1980s and 1990s: the minimal state, privatization, precariousness, flexibility, massive unemployment, wages, and do not guarantee a decent income, so many changes that have brought about a revolution if they had been applied once.

4. The strategy of deferring

Another way to accept an unpopular decision is to present it as "painful and necessary", gaining public acceptance, at the time for future application. It is easier to accept that a future sacrifice of immediate slaughter. First, because the effort is not used immediately. Then, because the public, masses, is always the tendency to expect naively that "everything will be better tomorrow" and that the sacrifice required may be avoided. This gives the public more time to get used to the idea of change and accept it with resignation when the time comes.

5. Go to the public as a little child

Most of the advertising to the general public uses speech, argument, people and particularly children's intonation, often close to the weakness, as if the viewer were a little child or a mentally deficient. The harder one tries to deceive the viewer look, the more it tends to adopt a tone infantilising. Why? "If one goes to a person as if she had the age of 12 years or less, then, because of suggestion, she tends with a certain probability that a response or reaction also devoid of a critical sense as a person 12 years or younger (see Silent Weapons for Quiet War)."

6. Use the emotional side more than the reflection

Making use of the emotional aspect is a classic technique for causing a short circuit on rational analysis , and finally to the critical sense of the individual. Furthermore, the use of emotional register to open the door to the unconscious for implantation or grafting ideas , desires, fears and anxieties , compulsions, or induce behaviors ...

7. Keep the public in ignorance and mediocrity

Making the public incapable of understanding the technologies and methods used to control and enslavement. “The quality of education given to the lower social classes must be the poor and mediocre as possible so that the gap of ignorance it plans among the lower classes and upper classes is and remains impossible to attain for the lower classes (See „ Silent Weapons for Quiet War).”

8. To encourage the public to be complacent with mediocrity

Promote the public to believe that the fact is fashionable to be stupid, vulgar and uneducated...

9. Self-blame Strengthen

To let individual blame for their misfortune, because of the failure of their intelligence, their abilities, or their efforts. So, instead of rebelling against the economic system, the individual autodesvalida and guilt, which creates a depression, one of whose effects is to inhibit its action. And, without action, there is no revolution!

10. Getting to know the individuals better than they know themselves

Over the past 50 years, advances of accelerated science has generated a growing gap between public knowledge and those owned and operated by dominant elites. Thanks to biology, neurobiology and applied psychology, the “system” has enjoyed a sophisticated understanding of human beings, both physically and psychologically. The system has gotten better acquainted with the common man more than he knows himself. This means that, in most cases, the system exerts greater control and great power over individuals, greater than that of individuals about themselves.

Theatre Review: The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution

The most disturbing part of Caryl Churchill's *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution* is the relevance its main themes have today. Set in a psychiatric hospital at the time of the Algerian war of liberation from colonialism, it explores the cognitive aftermath of torture on both victims and torturers, and the moral obscurity under which all this takes place – think Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.

Since it was penned in the early 70s, the play has remained unperformed until its world premiere at the Finborough Theatre in London this April.

Churchill's piece draws on the work of Frantz Fanon, a Martinique-born psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary and author, whose work *The Wretched of the Earth* is largely considered definitive in subject. A psychiatrist in the 50s war for independence in Algeria, Fanon eventually resigned so he could join the Algerian National Liberation Front.

His writing does not only inspire the script, but Fanon (Miles Mitchell) himself features in the play. Head of the psychiatric unit in an Algerian hospital, he listens to a series of disturbed patients, all tangled up in the revolution, unload their experiences of war and colonialism onto him.

A father and French civil servant "who brings his work home with him" (that is victims to torture) and his wife attempt to have their daughter Francoise admitted as being insane, refusing to listen to her. She is clearly perturbed at what is happening around her, convinced they are trying to poison her.

Two Algerian patients languish in the hospital, one a self-absorbed, paranoid patriot, the other a revolutionary. A prop, in the shape of a life-size elderly patient, offers an unusual and slightly bizarre twist to the set of characters. Another character is a French policeman so distressed about his role torturing Algerians for information that it has spilt over into his home life as he becomes uncontrollably violent towards his wife and daughters.

As the characters bare their souls to Fanon, it is not only the psychological repercussions of torture or colonialism on the consciousness that are on display. It is also the frame of mind in which they place themselves in order to justify their actions as oppressors.

Francoise's parents, for example, are defensive and unable to see beyond their interpretation of reality. When challenged by Francoise, they believe her simply to be against them. Casual racist, or ignorant remarks enforce the idea that they must protect themselves from the "savages" or Algerians, in a manner reminiscent of the governments of apartheid South Africa and present day Israel.

Although the play was deep in meaning, it was flat in performance. Perhaps it is the fact that it started out as a radio piece, or that it took 40 years to reach the stage that accounts for its drawbacks. The 90-minute performance was generally quite drawn out and tedious at times; though the play makes a clear statement about oppression, and delves head first into the themes of racism, colonialism and psychiatric illness, its way of doing so is far from subtle at times.

But obvious though they may be, many of the issues raised have certainly proved to be timeless.

About Pedagogy of the Oppressed

**To the oppressed,
and to those who suffer with them
and fight at their side**

- dedication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

First published in Portuguese in 1968, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was translated and published in English in 1970. The methodology of the late Paulo Freire has helped to empower countless impoverished and illiterate people throughout the world. Freire's work has taken on especial urgency in the United States and Western Europe, where the creation of a permanent underclass among the underprivileged and minorities in cities and urban centers is increasingly accepted as the norm.

Years before he was "invited" to leave his homeland after the military coup of 1964, Freire had begun devoting his life to the advancement of the fortunes of the impoverished people of Brazil. After his twenty-year exile he moved first to Chile, then emigrated to the United States before returning to Brazil. In the course of his work and travels, and as a result of his studies in the philosophy of education, he evolved a theory for the education of illiterates, especially adults, based on the conviction that every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others, and that provided with the proper tools for such encounter he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality and deal critically with it. When an illiterate peasant participates in this sort of educational experience he comes to a new awareness of self, a new sense of dignity; he is stirred by new hope.

"We were blind, now our eyes have been opened."

"Before this, words meant nothing to me; now they speak to me and I can make them speak."

"I work, and working I transform the world."

As the illiterate person learns and is able to make such statements, his world becomes radically transformed and he is no longer willing to be a mere object responding to changes occurring around him. The educated are more likely to decide to take upon themselves the struggle to change the structures of society that until now have served to oppress them. This radical self-awareness, however, is not only the task of the workers, but of persons in all countries, including those who in our advanced technological society have been or are being programmed into conformity and thus are essentially part of "the culture of silence."

Over one million copies of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* have been sold worldwide since the first English translation in 1970. It has been used on courses as varied as Philosophy of Education, Liberation Theology, Introduction to Marxism, Critical Issues in Contemporary Education, Communication Ethics and Education Policy. It has been translated into many languages, including German, Italian, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, and French.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is one of the foundational texts in the field of **critical pedagogy**, which attempts to help students question and challenge domination, and the beliefs and practices that dominate.

Inside the Empire's Closet: Skeletons of War Crime, Mayhem and Murder

Caroline Elkins's *Imperial Reckoning* is a study of the British response to the Mau Mau insurrection in Kenya in the 1950s. While the history of the Mau Mau or, more correctly, Land and Freedom Army, has engaged the attention of some scholars, the subject has not aroused popular interest in the same way the independent struggles in Portuguese and French empires have. It is as if British imperial scholarship, which at one point dominated colonial historiography, wanted to retain a sanitized version of the empire's disintegration. After all, India, the jewel of the British empire, gained independence nonviolently, while minor players such as the Gold Coast were granted freedom on a silver platter. Elkins's study of the Mau Mau and the British response to it puts to rest such sanitized interpretations of the fall of the largest seaborne empire in human history.

As a colony Kenya provided all the lures of a tropical fairyland: fertile highlands free of malaria, blue skies year round, exotic wild life, picturesque landscape and all that within a day's drive from the coast. Unlike the typical working-class overseas immigrants, whose rationale for leaving Europe included the privilege that whiteness afforded in the colonies, Kenyan settlers either boasted a genuine aristocratic pedigree or at least affected some Oxfordian pretensions. By the time the Mau Mau uprising began in 1952, Kenya had become home to about 50,000 well-entrenched Europeans, notorious for their fanatic race outlook as much as for their claim to blue blood.

The relationship between the white settlers and the local African farmers during this period can be best characterized as that of a zero sum game. In just over a generation, the latter had witnessed their population reduced to a society of squatters or altogether pushed into "tribal" reserves. They had lost their political freedom and become a servile class, not to mention a sense of social alienation the elders must have felt as their children joined mission schools by the droves. Their men who fought against the Japanese in Burma, and against Nazism and Fascism in Europe and Africa, had returned home not as war heroes but as potential troublemakers that required constant government vigilance.

While postwar political developments at home can be described as more of the same, few of the politically conscious Kenyans could ignore the "winds of change" blowing elsewhere. Indonesia and India had gained independence by the late forties, followed by the overthrow of the pro-British Egyptian monarchy some years later. By the early 1950s, in short, Kenya like most other

colonies was ready for some political tremor. What few foresaw was, nevertheless, the level of violence to which Britain would resort in trying to contain this nationalist stir.

The exact circumstances leading to the Kikuyu anticolonial insurgency remain a mystery. Initiation rites such as the partaking in animal sacrifice and the swearing of a series of oaths gave the Mau Mau its secretive and almost religious aura. Members called themselves the Land and Freedom Army, but the British referred to them as Mau Mau, a derogatory term of unknown origin. Guerilla-style military operations, aimed mostly at settlers in isolated farmsteads, began in early 1952. Then came the turning point late that year. On October 21, following the assassination of a well-known loyalist chief, Governor Evelyn Baring declared a state of emergency. Immediate victims of the crackdown included the overseas-educated Jomo Kenyatta and a few more Kikuyu notables, whom Baring locked up for several years in the desert district of Lokitaung.

As subsequent investigations would reveal, the conservative Kenyatta had little to do with the underground resistance. The Land and Freedom Army had in fact been made up of loosely organized bands of peasant fighters with a sprinkle of World War II veterans here and there. Baring would provide the forest fighters their rallying figure, thanks to the trumped up charges that turned Kenyatta into a nationalist super hero.

By 1953 the colony had mobilized fully its resources to contain the insurgency. The well-publicized disproportionate use of military force, including aerial bombardment, constituted only one half of the story behind the British war in East Africa. The unconventional other half, little known in the outside world and now remembered by even fewer Kenyans, is the subject of Elkins's study. Unconventional anti-insurgency tactics included summary executions; electric shock; mass killings; mass deportations; slave labor; the burning down of villages and similar collective punishments; starvation; threatening harm to wives and children; sodomization and rape; and soaking prisoners with human waste. When the emergency ended seven years later, African death due to such acts of cruelty ran perhaps as high as 300,000, almost thirty times the mainstream figure of 11,000 (p. 366). By contrast, insurgents had killed about eighteen hundred loyalists as well as thirty-two settlers.

Albeit on a much more minor scale, the British reign of terror in Kenya almost paralleled Nazi racial atrocities. Moreover, it happened in just less than a decade since World War II, as the West was still coming to grips with the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust. Unlike the gas chambers, however, the world would know little of the Kenyan concentration camps even half a century after the fact. This collective amnesia is the background against which Elkins establishes London's colonial excesses, thereby deconstructing the *Pax Britannica* image.

Basing her argument on various sources of evidence, from recently declassified archival materials to oral interviews with ex-colonial officials and Mau Mau survivors, Elkins challenges the conventional interpretation of the British response to Mau Mau as measured and within the

realm of "civilized" behavior. "I've come to believe that during the Mau Mau war British forces wielded their authority with a savagery that betrayed a perverse colonial logic," the Harvard professor writes, adding: "I now believe there was in late colonial Kenya a murderous campaign to eliminate Kikuyu people, a campaign that left tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, dead" (pp. xv-xvi).

Anecdotal examples lend credence to Elkins's argument that the British engaged in more than a mere anti-insurgency operation. A settler in the Rift Valley province, remembered by the locals as Joseph Mengele, ran his own interrogation camp where suspects were castrated and forced to eat their testicles, or burned alive (p. 67). Another notorious group, popularly known as the Kenya's SS and made up of mostly South African police, was in charge of the Mbakasi labor camp, now the site of the Kenyatta International Airport, where tortures and murders happened regularly behind closed doors (p. 86). Sadists and race fanatics in fact seemed to have found a common ground in the anti-Mau Mau operation. One American, who volunteered his service as interrogator, boasted of his preference for the knife so as to inflict a slow and painful death in full view of other suspects. Another British officer remembered how he and two other white colleagues stood and grinned as their Alsatian reduced a healthy prisoner into a heap of blood and scattered flesh in a matter of minutes.

Of course, there is no such a thing as a clean war. But the collaborative accounts by over a hundred informants, whom Elkins interviews in person, demonstrate that such gruesome mayhems and racist orgies remained the rule, not the exception in screening centers and detention camps across Kikuyuland in the 1950s.

The campaign for "hearts and minds," as the officials ironically dubbed the anti-insurgency war, focused on the detention camps or the pipeline. From 1954 on, the camps hosted about 80,000 detainees at any given time, which means hundreds of thousands of men must have been rotated through them by 1960. The pipeline began in cities or villages where thousands would be rounded up randomly and put on packed trains and buses for undisclosed destinations. Once in the remote holding centers, the ordeal of detention life would start, accompanied by hard labor and punctuated by a series of interrogation or screening tortures. Those who confessed or "spat back the oath" would be sent to rehabilitation centers, while hardcore Mau Mau adherents were transferred to special camps where back-breaking labor and tortures of all sorts claimed many more lives.

Women, while a small fraction of detainees, made up an important component. Over four thousand women went through the pipeline each year. About 15 percent of them were interned with their young ones while many others gave birth in detention (p. 227). In general, men ran the female holding centers with all the consequences it entailed. In one instance, however, an eccentric female settler, the notorious Katherine Warren Gash, reigned over the screening process with as much terror as any of her male counterparts (p. 222).

The frequent accusations against women dealt with taking the oath or passing information to the forest fighters. The range of tortures they suffered, from the insertion of foreign objects in their vaginas to having their breasts cut off by pliers, was proof that the interrogators made little distinction between actual combatants and those with supporting roles. In fact, given the presence of children in the detention camps, the psychological trauma faced by female detainees was much worse than that suffered by husbands and brothers.

Where Elkins's study is equally at its best in reconstructing the gender dimension of British war crime in Kenya is in her discussion of the forced villagization. About 1.5 million Kikuyus, almost the entire population, were resettled in 804 villages. Barbed wires and spiked trenches surrounded the villages so as to strangle the fighters in their forest hideouts by denying them access to civilians. Since a large number of men were already in detention camps, villagization affected mostly women, children, the old and the disabled. Evictions, which often began with the burning down of villages, took place with no advance warning, with many dying in the process and others barely making it out alive. In the makeshift villages the excesses from the detention camps were reenacted: rape, forced labor, torture, diseases, and famine. Villagization would succeed in severing the fighters' lifeline, but at the cost of tens of thousands of civilians, mostly women and children (p. 234).

Although Elkins's central theme is British war crime in Kenya, she also addresses the topic of African agency, especially the ingenuity with which detainees responded to camp life. While no doubt many succumbed to tortures and the incessant psychological warfare, others devised various techniques of resistance: from engaging in discreet letter writing campaigns to using the prison ground for the recruitment of new Mau Mau converts. Complementing detainee resistance from within was the overseas lobby by a small but vocal group of Labour MPs such as Barbara Castle and Fenner Brockway. However, just as the home guards got in the way of detainee resistance, so did the stonewalling of the Colonial Office and the British government against such voices of conscience.

A groundbreaking contribution to colonial historiography, *Imperial Reckoning* is a timely publication in light of the recent scandals at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. Methodological questions may be raised about Elkins's liberality with figures as well as the authenticity of individual testimonies that make up the bulk of her sources on torture and detention. But one has only to remember the German genocide in Southwest Africa, the death of millions in Leopold's Congo, or the Italian use of chemical weapons in Ethiopia, to know that the onus of disproof for such data lies on defendants of empire.