

The Construction of an Alternative to “Manufactured Dissent”

Book Review

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

In [The Globalization of War](#), **Michel Chossudovsky** writes of the process of “manufacturing dissent,” which functions to channel the anger and frustrations of the people in a direction that does not challenge elite interests.

The concept of manufacturing *dissent* takes as its point of departure the notion of “manufactured consent,” used by **Edward S. Herman** and **Noam Chomsky** to refer to the forging by the mass media of a popular consensus in support of established norms, values, and institutions. Fabricated through the media’s narrative and its factual distortions, the consensus functions to serve the interests of corporate elites. This fabricated mainstream narrative, Chossudovsky maintains, includes affirmation of the principle of democracy, and accordingly, the elite has an interest in accepting dissent and protest, in order to create the illusion of democracy. But the dissent cannot go too far, in that it cannot actually threaten elite interests. Therefore, the elite seeks “to shape and mold the protest movement, to set the outer limits of dissent, to control dissent.” It seeks to channel popular discontent in a direction that does not threaten to expose the fundamental historical and contemporary facts that presently are beyond the horizon of popular consciousness.

Funding Dissent

The manufacturing of dissent, Chossudovsky maintains, is achieved by donating financial resources to NGOs, civil society organizations, trade unions, and political parties that are involved in organizing protests against the established order. In this way, social movement leaders are coopted and manipulated, channeling the movement away from ideas and strategies that would constitute a true threat to elite interests.

Central to the funding of dissent are private foundations, including the Ford, Rockefeller, and McCarthy foundations, which fund antiwar collectives and people’s movements as well as environmental movements and supposedly progressive anti-capitalist networks, with the intention of molding and manipulating the protest movement. In addition, the channeling of protest movements is aided by the fact that “many NGOs are infiltrated by informants often acting on behalf of western intelligence agencies.” Through these means, the illusion of democracy is maintained, with anti-establishment organizations and protests visible to the public eye. But the elite remains firmly in control, as the protests and supposedly anti-establishment movements are rendered incapable of asking the most fundamental questions.

Elite funding of civil society organizations tends to focus on particular issues, such as the environment, anti-globalization, peace, women’s rights, or climate change. This leads to the

compartmentalization of dissent, which undermines the formation of a cohesive mass movement that integrates the various popular sectors and issues, thus limiting its impact on political dynamics and popular consciousness.

Chossudovsky provides numerous examples indicating U.S./NATO support for “opposition” sectors in the Middle East and Eastern Europe as an imperialist strategy. He further notes that the anti-globalization and occupy movements in the United States were infiltrated and manipulated. I would submit that similar questions should be asked with respect to the Black Lives Matter Movement, which provides a unidimensional explanation of a multifaceted historical and contemporary problem, bursting on the national scene in an historic moment in which various social sectors are in a condition of anxiety and a disposition to rebellion, due to the economic consequences of worldwide health restrictions. Why was it that, in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, prominent political figures not known for their commitment to social transformation expressed support for the Black Lives Matter Movement?

What can be done?

Chossudovsky maintains that the development of a true mass movement “cannot be led by organizations which are financed by corporate foundations.” On the ideological plane, he maintains that the lies and fabrications that legitimate the “war on terrorism” must be exposed; and that the structures of power and the nature of the capitalist world order must be challenged.

With respect to strategies and tactics, Chossudovsky maintains that “the holding of mass demonstrations and antiwar protests is not enough. What is required is the development of a broad and well-organized grassroots antiwar network, nationally and internationally.” What is required is “a massive campaign of networking and outreach to inform people across the land, nationally and internationally, in neighborhoods, workplaces, parishes, schools, universities and municipalities.”

I would like to further reflect on the development of a national mass network of people in places of work and study and in neighborhoods. And I would like to begin by basing our reflection in the study of revolutions and mass movements in other lands, where the peoples confronted challenges similar to the challenges that we face today, in that they confronted their own powerlessness before structures of domination, exploitation, and ideological distortions. Many of the most successful of these revolutionary movements of the last 100 years are known to us, but for the most part we do not study them with sufficient care to enable us to discern how they accomplished the taking of political power and the partial, even if sometimes temporary, transformation of structures of power in their various nations. I refer to the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Vietnamese Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the socialist revolution in Chile led by **Salvador Allende**, the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the Movement toward Socialism led by **Evo Morales** in Bolivia, and the Citizen Revolution headed by **Rafael Correa** in Ecuador.

We have in these cases the experience of revolutionary theory developing in practice, providing sources for our understanding of human social dynamics and of the process through which humanity can take steps toward the development of a more just world.

The first and most important lesson to be learned from the world’s revolutions is that the

political and economic accomplishments of these processes were forged through the development of an integrated movement of all of the sectors of the people. Although it was natural for the people to think of themselves as peasants or workers or professionals, as blacks or whites or mulattos or mestizos, and as men or women, all the revolutions proceeded on a foundation of the unification of all the people in united political action in support of common principles and political proposals. Our observation of these revolutions confirms Chossudovsky's lament of the fragmentation of the popular movement today.

The second important lesson is that none of these revolutions were confused or divided concerning what their fundamental objective was or ought to be. For all of them, the fundamental objective was the taking of political power, by themselves, and in the name of the people. The taking of political power can only occur in a form that is adapted to national conditions, and therefore, the tactics varied. In Russia, the revolutionary party seized power on the basis of the control of popular councils by workers, peasants, and soldiers. In China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua, power was taken by a guerrilla force that began in the countryside and triumphed in the city. And in Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, political power was taken through the electoral process of representative democracy. In spite of these differences, the leadership of these revolutionary processes were clearly committed to the taking of control of one or more state structures, and of continuing the revolutionary struggle against the national and international counterrevolution from that position of triumph. In revolutionary practice, the fundamental slogan has been "Power to the people."

With consciousness of these dynamics of revolutionary processes of the last 100 years, we are able to see the necessity of forming a political party or a political movement that seeks to take political power. Our agenda ought not be the pressuring or persuading of elites to enact particular reforms. Nor should it be "speaking truth to power." And our agenda must go beyond the education of the people to the taking of power by the people, in the long term and in accordance with a formulated plan. The road to a more just world is the taking of control of the political structures of nation-states, so that the peoples can govern said states in accordance with their interests, continuing the struggle of the world's revolutions.

Taking into account the corruption of political parties in processes of representative democracy, a newly formed political party must be an alternative party that redefines what a political party is and does. It has to be a party that above all educates the people, and the first lesson to be taught is the capacity of the people to take power and to govern by and for themselves. And it has to educate the people beyond the superficialities of the current prevailing tendencies of reform and rebellion, guiding the people to a profound understanding of the historical development of the established political-economic-ideological system and of the structural transformations that are necessary for genuine human liberty and for a more just society.

In the revolutions of the last one hundred years, manifestos and platforms were written, with the intention of explaining to the people. The example of reading and seeking to understand was placed before the people, and commitment to developing understanding was established as a responsibility of membership in the revolutionary party. This integration of intellectual work in the revolutionary process was fully present in the American Revolution; during the entire revolutionary era of 1763 to 1840, numerous pamphlets were written, and pamphleteering played a central role in the political process and public debate.

In *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Bernard Bailyn writes that the spokespersons for the revolution were active politicians, merchants, lawyers, plantation owners, and preachers who expressed their ideas in pamphlets, usually from 5,000 to 25,000 words printed in ten to fifty pages, although some extended to sixty or eighty pages. Most were responses to the great events of the time, such as the Stamp Act or the Boston Massacre. Some generated a series of replies, rebuttals, and counter-rebuttals. Some were published in commemoration of the anniversary of the particular events. And the pamphlets were written with the intention to persuade.

“The American writers were profoundly reasonable people. Their pamphlets convey scorn, anger, and indignation; but rarely blind hate, rarely panic fear. They sought to convince their opponents, not . . . annihilate them. . . . The communication of understanding, therefore, lay at the heart of the Revolutionary movement, and its great expressions, embodied in the best of the pamphlets, are consequently expository and explanatory: didactic, systematic, and direct, rather than imaginative and metaphoric. . . . The reader is led through arguments, not images. The pamphlets aim to persuade.”

We have to retake these examples in the history of popular revolutions. We have to forge the unity of the people through a narrative and a platform that is historically informed, scientifically based, and politically intelligent. We have to write pamphlets that explain to the people the fundamental facts of our reality. Pamphlets that explain the central role of European conquest and colonialism, which provide the structural foundation for today’s global inequalities. Pamphlets explaining that development through domination and exploitation has reached its limits, because the capitalist world-economy has reached and overextended the geographical and ecological limits of the earth. Pamphlets that explain to the people that the governments and movements of the Third World are proclaiming the need for cooperation among the nations and peoples as the only possible way toward a more just, democratic, and sustainable world-system. Pamphlets that call the people toward that cooperation and mutually beneficial trade that is the necessary road for humanity today, leaving behind the historically outdated matrix of economic development through domination and exploitation and leaving behind the stage of competing imperialisms.

Our peoples already know that their governments lie to them, so the alternative political party ought to be able to delegitimize the lies and distortions that establishment politicians and parties routinely disseminate. And the focus ought to be on the big lies, such as omitting the history of colonialist exploitation and intervention with respect to a particular region; and presenting governments that defend the sovereignty of their nations as threats to humanity. In every case in which the global powers designate a country as a supposed threat, the alternative political party has to be present distributing PDFs that explain the true history and political-economy of said nation. If we explain with thoroughness and clarity, our people would be able to understand that the government is distorting reality in order to advance its imperialist objectives.

We have to explain to our peoples that imperialist wars are not in their interests. Wars are in the interests of corporations, because they provide spectacular markets and profits in the production and distribution of arms and military supplies. And if successful, imperialist wars can make markets, raw materials, and cheap labor available in a relatively permanent form. Moreover, wars give corporations a free hand, because the government is dependent on them to produce arms and military supplies.

But if the nation is at peace, and if the people have control of the government, there is the possibility that the government can regulate the corporations and direct the economy, channeling productive processes toward responding to the fundamental human needs of the people as well as toward addressing the serious problems that humanity confronts. The alternative political party has to be present with pamphlets and public discourses that debunk the distorted claims that are designed to provide pretexts for imperialist wars, pamphlets and discourses that are effective in explaining to and persuading the people and in presenting an alternative approach to the development of the nation's economy.

The alternative political party has to develop mastery of the art of politics. It should put forth candidates in demographically favorable districts, with the intention that elected representatives of the party would be visible on a national level, educating the people with respect to the party's understanding, analysis, and platform. And the party should avoid putting forth a candidate in any election in which the party's candidate would enable a fascist to defeat a liberal. The party should cooperate with liberal politicians on some issues, as it focuses on the education and organization of the people and its goal of taking political power in the long run.

Can we move beyond critique and protest to the offering of politically viable alternatives to our peoples?

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[**The Globalization of War: America's "Long War" against Humanity**](#)

Michel Chossudovsky

The "globalization of war" is a hegemonic project. Major military and covert intelligence operations are being undertaken simultaneously in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Far East. The U.S. military agenda combines both major theater operations as well as covert actions geared towards destabilizing sovereign states.

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