

Establishment Media: Episode 2 of The Pyramid of Power Series by The Conscious Resistance

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The Conscious Resistance Network presents: The Pyramid of Power Ep. 2 – Establishment Media

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The Conscious Resistance Network presents: The Pyramid of Power, a brand-new 16-part documentary series aimed at exposing the individuals and institutions which seek to manipulate our world.

More details:

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Transcript:

For many people, one of the first things they do in the morning is check out their favorite news stations, newspapers, social media feeds, and websites to get informed on the important events of the day. People of all political persuasions have a desire to be informed about the world

around them and the topics they care about. The average person might believe that the hundreds of television stations, millions of websites, and never ending social media feeds offer a limitless resource of factual, credible information that will keep them up to date about the important issues.

However, as with the education system, there are many concerns related to mass media and the numerous conflicts of interest. First, let's start by looking at the history of media ownership in the United States and around the world.

In the early 1980's, about 50 corporations controlled most of American media, including magazines, books, music, newspapers, movie studios, radio and television stations. Within a decade that number would drop to around 25 and by the year 2000, just six corporations had control of about 90% of media. As of 2020, that number is down to 5 corporations. These corporations include ATT, Disney, Comcast, Fox Corp, and National Amusements. Many of the previous large media corporations have been purchased by or merged with one of the top 5.

Comcast owns NBC, Telemundo, MSNBC, CNBC, USA Network, Syfy, Oxygen, Bravo, the film studio Universal Pictures, multiple animation studios and Universal Parks & Resorts.

Disney owns Walt Disney Studios which includes Pixar, Marvel Studios, LucasFilm, and 20th Century Studios. Disney also owns ESPN and ABC News and networks.

Fox Corp owns Fox, Fox New Channel, Fox Business, Fox Sports, while National Amusements owns ViacomCBS which owns Paramount Pictures, CBS Entertainment Network, Nickelodeon, BET, MTV, Comedy Central, and various international networks.

ATT is the world's largest media and entertainment company in terms of revenue. The mega corporation owns the WarnerMedia group which has film, tv, and cable assets, including WarnerBros, HBO, Cartoon Network, Adult Swim, DC

Entertainment, TBS, TNT, and TruTv.

Globally, large media conglomerates include Bertelsmann, National Amusements (ViacomCBS), Sony Corporation, Hearst Communications, MGM Holdings Inc., and Grupo Globo in South America.

There are also major news organizations not owned by the “big five.” The New York Times is owned by the publicly-held New York Times Corporation, The Washington Post is owned by Nash Holdings, an LLC owned by Amazon’s Jeff Bezos. The Hearst Family-owned Hearst Publications owns 24 newspapers including the San Francisco Chronicle and Houston Chronicle, as well as magazines, television stations and cable and interactive media.

Rupert Murdoch is the executive co-chairman of Fox Corporation and is also chairman of News Corp, which owns The Wall Street Journal and other publications. Altogether, his family controls 120 newspapers across five countries. Billionaire Michael Bloomberg is also a longtime media mogul with Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Media.

Donald Newhouse and his brother Samuel Newhouse inherited Advance Publications, a privately-held media company that controls newspapers, magazine, cable TV and entertainment assets including Discovery Channel, Reddit, and Conde Nast, which publishes magazines Wired, Vanity Fair, GQ, The New Yorker and Vogue. Several other billionaires, including Comcast CEO Brian Roberts and Liberty Media Chairman John Malone, own or control cable TV networks that are powerful but not primarily news focused.

One clear example of how funding by billionaires and mega-corporations can create a conflict of interest came in 2016 when The New York Times [published an article](#) criticizing the power that billionaires wield over media companies. One ultra-wealthy media investor not mentioned in the story: Mexican

billionaire Carlos Slim. At the time, Slim owned the largest individual stake in the Times but was not mentioned. Slim sold half of stocks in 2017, but still [remains the second largest shareholder](#). While there is no clear evidence that Slim played any role in the omission of his ownership of the Times, it does illustrate the difficulty the average reader faces in assessing who is trying to influence their worldview.

It's clear that the consolidation of the media presents an opportunity for the corporations, shareholders, families, and individuals behind the media to influence and shape public opinion. This is one of the reasons the media has often been called "The Fourth Estate", a phrase derived from the traditional European concept of the three estates: The Clergy, Nobility, and the common people. The Fourth Estate represents a "fourth power" in press and news media which have the capacity to advocate for and frame political issues.

In the 1988 book *Manufacturing Consent*, noted intellectual and linguist Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman argue that the mass media of the U.S. are effective and powerful institutions which use "system-supportive propaganda" to influence the public without use of coercion. They call this the propaganda model of communication.

(the first 1:35)

In the 2002 introduction to the book, they write, "*The media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy.*"

Chomsky has gone on to describe various methods the media uses to influence public opinion, including by distraction; gradualism; deferring actions until a later date that the public might be more accepting; talking to the public like

children; stirring up viewers' emotions; keeping the public ignorant; promoting trends; blaming the public for problems; and by understanding the underlying psychology of the masses.

Ben Bagdikian, [Pulitzer-prize winning journalist, former Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley and author of *The New Media Monopoly*,] describes the five media giants as a "cartel" that wields enough influence to change U.S. politics and define social values.

"The Ford Motor Company and General Motors do not compete to the death because each has too much to lose in an all-or-nothing rivalry. Similarly, the major media maintains their cartel-like relationships with only marginal differences among them, a relationship that leaves all of them alive and well – but leaves the majority of Americans with artificially narrowed choices in their media."

Ruling Class Journalism

As early as 1973, reports started to reveal that the U.S. Intelligence community was infiltrating foreign and domestic media. In late November of that year, [The NY Times reported](#) that the CIA had about three dozen American journalists working abroad on its payroll as undercover informants, some of them as full-time agents. None of the names of the journalists were revealed to the public.

In 1975, the U.S. Senate organized the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, otherwise known as The Church Committee, named after Idaho Senator Frank Church who chaired the committee. Church and his team were tasked with investigating abuses by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Security Agency (NSA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The Church Committee investigations are well-known for revealing many illegal activities by the intelligence community, including the discovery of Operation SHAMROCK, in

which the major telecommunications companies shared their traffic with the NSA from 1945 to the early 1970s. There was also a discussion about a poison-dart program that could cause someone to have a heart attack. And, of course, there were the infamous MK ULTRA documents which revealed the CIA's efforts to manipulate and control the human mind.

The [Church Committee's final report](#), published in April 1976, also covered CIA ties with both foreign and domestic news media. The report mentions that agents had planted false stories about activists, including Martin Luther King Jr. The report found that the CIA maintained a network of several hundred foreign individuals around the world who provide intelligence for the CIA and at times attempted to influence opinion through the use of covert propaganda. These individuals provide the CIA with direct access to many newspapers and periodicals, press services and news agencies, radio and television stations, commercial book publishers, and other foreign media outlets.

In the United States, the CIA estimated they had around 50 assets who are individual American journalists or employees of U.S. media organizations. The Committee found that more than a dozen United States news organizations and commercial publishing houses formerly provided cover for CIA agents abroad. A few of these organizations were unaware that they provided this cover.

At a House Intelligence Committee hearing in 1975, CIA Director William Colby was questioned about whether the agency had employees in tv networks and newspapers. Colby declined to answer and insisted on a "private executive session" to discuss the details of the arrangement.

In the January 28, 1976 article [C.I.A. Ties to Journalists](#), The New York Times reported:

[say: In 1976, a New York Times article titled 'CIA Ties to

Journalists' reported that]

"A draft copy of a report by the House Select Committee on Intelligence last week said that 11 full-time officers of the Central Intelligence Agency were posing as journalists overseas in connection with their intelligence work. The report said further that until 1978 live agents posed as full-time correspondents with organizations that have "major general news impact." Moreover, the report said, some 15 news organizations had cooperated with the C.I.A. in providing "cover" for C.I.A. operatives."

The Times goes on to state that, *"Press freedom here is protected from Government intrusion under the First Amendment to the Constitution and thus a reader, viewer or listener has the right to expect that the news will not be slanted to conform to a governmental position*

An agent reporting from abroad to the United States would face an impossible task in sorting out his allegiance to his real employer, the C.I.A., from that to his news organization and its readers."

The C.I.A. formally refused to make public the names of which American news agencies cooperate with the C.I.A., which ones allowed themselves to be used as a cover and the names of the reporters who secretly worked for the C.I.A. The Times also noted that Sam Jaffe, a former tv reporter who admitted to working with the FBI, accused popular journalists like Walter Cronkite of CBS of being on the list of journalists paid by the CIA.

The CIA's manipulation of the mainstream media has come to be known as "Operation Mockingbird" despite the name never actually being used by the government.

(Corbett Mockingbird answer)

Carl Bernstein's 1977 Rolling Stone article, [The CIA and the](#)

[Media](#), reported that the relationship between the intelligence community and the mainstream media was much more extensive than even the Church Committee revealed. Bernstein alleged that the committee actually helped cover up some of the worst aspects of the partnership because it would have revealed “embarrassing relationships in the 1950s and 1960s with some of the most powerful organizations and individuals in American journalism.”

Bernstein reported that from 1950 to 1966, about ten CIA employees were provided cover by the NY Times under arrangements approved by the newspaper’s late publisher, Arthur Hays Sulzberger. The cover arrangements were part of a general Times policy to “provide assistance to the CIA whenever possible.” In addition, Sulzberger was a close friend of CIA Director Allen Dulles.

Bernstein’s reporting also showed that during the 1950’s, the CIA conducted a “formal training program” to instruct its agents to function as newsmen. *“These were the guys who went through the ranks and were told ‘You’re going to be a journalist,’”* one CIA official told Bernstein. Bernstein also reported that the CIA’s former director Allen Dulles and close friend Henry Luce, the founder of Time and Life magazines, regularly allowed members of his staff to work for the CIA.

Several other revelations came out in 1977, including Sig Mickelson, former head of CBS, admitting he had [often worked with the intelligence community in the 1950’s](#). Additionally, [the Times reported](#) that “ ” as part of a global propaganda network maintained by the agency. Perhaps even more damaging, William Colby admitted that some American networks had [unwittingly repeated false stories](#) planted by the CIA.

The CIA claimed the practice of using journalists to distribute stories had ended in 1973. However, in July 1996, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence held a [hearing](#) regarding public policy on the CIA’s possible use of

journalists, clergy, or Peace Corps. The Director of CIA at that time, John Deutch, wanted to change regulations prohibiting the use of journalists, clergy and missionaries, and the Peace Corps abroad to perform political intelligence operations.

A [NY Times article from February 1996](#) notes that Deutch was questioned about reports that the CIA had secretly waived 1977 regulations in “extraordinarily rare” occasions, and used journalistic or media cover for intelligence activities overseas. CIA officials declined to acknowledge whether members of church leadership have been used as CIA assets as well. Interestingly, the Times articles notes that the controversy over the CIA’s use of “nondiplomatic covers” came after recommendations by a “a task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations.” The task force called for ending “legal and policy restraints” that limited the CIA’s use of such nondiplomatic covers as journalists and members of clergy.

The reason this connection is interesting is because only 3 years earlier, in 1993, Richard Harwood, journalist and former editor of The Washington Post, wrote a powerful article titled, [Ruling Class Journalists](#), in which he outlines how the American corporate mainstream media serves the agenda of the ruling class. Harwood doesn’t focus his column on the U.S. intelligence agencies which are using the media to spread various types of propaganda. Instead, Harwood discusses the connection between the American media and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Harwood writes:

“In its 70-year history, the quarterly journal Foreign Affairs has had but five editors. The fifth, recently appointed, is James Hoge, former publisher of the New York Daily News and before that editor of the Chicago Sun-Times. The quarterly is published by the Council on Foreign Relations, whose members

are the nearest thing we have to a ruling establishment in the United States.

The president is a member. So is his secretary of state, the deputy secretary of state, all five of the undersecretaries, several of the assistant secretaries and the department's legal adviser. The president's national security adviser and his deputy are members. The director of Central Intelligence (like all previous directors) and the chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board are members. "

Harwood goes on to note that many leading figures of American political life were members, including *"Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance, McGeorge Bundy, Gov. Mario Cuomo and so on."*

In later chapters of this series we will return to the topic of the Council on Foreign Relations and how non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and non-profits also play a role in The Pyramid of Power.

The point is that the media around the world are not only influenced by corporate dollars and interests, but they are often a tool for disseminating intelligence community propaganda and promoting the agenda of the ruling class. Despite the promises of ending collaboration between spy agencies and journalists, as recently as 2014, the CIA was caught [collaborating with a journalist from the LA Times](#).

The Rise of Independent Media

Due to the consistent failures of the corporate media and the glaring bias, the public has developed a thirst for unfiltered, honest reporting that is not often found on television and radio networks. The Internet helped accelerate the rise of an "independent" or "alternative" media where citizen journalists, activists, self-taught reporters, and social media commentators compete directly with the corporate media. The internet also saw the launch of hundreds of

thousands of new websites that do not fit into the traditional media hierarchy. In the mid-2000's, with the emergence of YouTube and other popular social media networks, the alternative media was able to outpace the mainstream media and reach the masses at an unprecedented rate.

By the 2010's, a growing eco-system of alternative media websites, channels, podcasts, and reporters began to materialize. Some outlets eschewed the glitz and glamour of the corporate media in favor of reports broadcast in living rooms and from the streets. Other outlets aimed to recreate the professionalism of the mainstream while retaining a willingness to question all angles.

Unfortunately, the decentralized nature of the internet has been forsaken in favor of centralized institutions which offer search engines, social media, and other internet services. The vast majority of the public use Google, Facebook, and YouTube to learn about the world around them. These folks mistakenly assume that they are seeing everything that is available on the internet. As we will detail in our upcoming chapter on Big Tech, this is far from true.

After the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, many independent outlets and journalists from across the political spectrum faced another attack in the form of the "fake news" meme. First popularized by Donald Trump, the fake news label was quickly used to attack any outlets that did not parrot the mainstream version of events around the 2016 election. One by one, independent media websites and pages were labeled "fake news" or "Russian disinformation" and subsequently deleted from various social media platforms. Since that time, the social media landscape has shifted even further, with the use of corporate fact checkers and banning of certain topics altogether.

Another way the Pyramid of Power maintains influence is through purchasing and/or funding so-called "new media"

companies which attempt to portray themselves as independent and are typically marketed towards a younger audience. Despite the slick presentation and use of a younger, diverse crowd as reporters, these companies are merely a rebranding of the same propaganda distributed by the billionaires, corporations, and intelligence agencies. Some of these companies include Vice Media, Vox Media, and BuzzFeed.

The intelligence agencies' attempts to manipulate and influence public opinion goes beyond hiring journalists. According to one of the documents leaked by Edward Snowden, the British government maintains software for "Online Persona Management". The British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) operates an elite unit known as the Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group (JTRIG). The documents outline tactics employed by the agency, including ways to manipulate public opinion, understand human thinking and behavior, and encourage conformity. One of the reports from 2011 outlines JTRIG's tactics, including uploading YouTube videos containing "*persuasive communications*," starting Facebook groups and Twitter accounts, and creating fake online personalities and supporters "*to discredit, promote distrust, dissuade, deter, delay or disrupt.*" The unit used social media campaigns to encourage and foster "*obedience*" and "*conformity*".

The British Intelligence and the US Intelligence community both desire to promote obedience and conformity within the public. They aim to keep the public propagandized, distracted, misinformed, and fighting amongst themselves. The billionaires use their media outlets and their friends in government to keep the public blissfully unaware of their efforts to gain power and wealth.

Thankfully, there are solutions.

Even with the censorship and outright deleting of alternative media journalist and outlets, there are some solutions

available. For starters, more and more mainstream journalists are opting to leave behind the corporate world and join the independent media in the interest of reporting factual, investigating journalism. The last decade has seen Amber Lyon leave CNN, Sharyl Attkisson leave CBS, Glenn Greenwald leave The Guardian for The Intercept, and then leave The Intercept to go completely independent. Another mainstream journalist turned independent reporter is Ben Swann, a former anchor for CBS Atlanta who left after facing censorship for his reporting.

I recently spoke with Ben Swann about what he sees as the failures of the MSM, including the idea that journalists cannot have opinions.

Swann and other former mainstream journalists have not only abandoned traditional media outlets. Many have begun using alternative social media platforms and websites to broadcast their video reports and articles. Glenn Greenwald and journalist Matt Taibi have begun using independent service SubStack to publish their reports, while Swann has launched his own video service, Ise.Media, to report freely without being censored by social media companies and search engines.

Additionally, there are a number of alternative social media sites and video hosting platforms that have begun to offer a censorship free experience for those who desire an unfiltered social media and news platform. Sites like Bitchute, LBRY, Minds, Flote, and Hive offer content creators options for overcoming the mainstream media dominance.

As consumers of the media, we have the opportunity to support websites and platforms that provide fair coverage of important events. As Ben Swann noted, this doesn't mean news media that has no opinion or bias. Rather, it's the expectation that the media will trust the viewer to consume content from a wide range of opinions and views, and make up their own mind.

The answer is for each of us to make a conscious decision to unplug from state-run propaganda networks and online platforms that attempt to make up your mind for you. The answer is to support independent media organizations and journalists who do the vital work of dissecting the world around us and presenting the facts to the public. Only by consciously choosing to support true independent media that is not funded by billionaires, corporations, and spy agencies, can we hope to preserve a free media that will empower and educate the public.

To learn more about the control and manipulation of the media, we recommend reading:

[Noam Chomsky's Manufacturing of Consent](#)

[Ben Bagdikian's The New Media Monopoly](#)

[**Connect with The Conscious Resistance**](#)