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COMMENTARY: A LESSON IN CRITICAL THINKING:

Emotional Blackmail, Cognitive Dissonance, the Media & the Middle East

by An Anonymous Journalist

Emotional blackmail (Demand, Resistance, Pressure Threats, Compliance and Repetition) is not used exclusively in personal relationships. It is used any time one group or person wants to force its agenda, opinion or will on another. You've probably witnessed it on the job and currently you can study the effects simply by turning on the news.

Each of these tactics has been used extensively by the media and the government in the United States since September 11, 2001 to push the agenda and create agreement within the US population and worldwide. Commentators like *Bill O'Reilly* and *Sean Hannity* are masters with this tactic and provide nightly opportunities to study it in action. Former *President Bill Clinton* knew well how to use emotional blackmail to his advantage. It is a persuasive tool. The purpose of emotional blackmail is to control, redirect and ultimately create a state of cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is the state of confusion that occurs when facts become twisted into half-truths, colliding with common sense and suddenly you are convinced 2+2 = 5. Your instincts tell you something isn't right; yet the information you are fed and exposed to counteracts your instincts causing you to doubt yourself. Some refer to this as Orwellian speak, the act of taking antonyms and presenting them as synonyms: War is Peace, Consent is Patriotism, Disagreement is Anti-American or Rights are Weaknesses. These are some of the Orwellian messages Americans are currently sifting through.

Cognitive dissonance also occurs in the pairing of unrelated facts to create correlation. The best of example of this is *President Bush's* speech in which he mentioned Iraq and the September 11th attacks in the same sentence. The close proximity of the mentions is designed to create a correlation in peoples' minds even when the reality is different. By insinuating, people subconsciously take the idea and turn it to a possibility. Through repetition, the correlation becomes fact based upon misinformation. In time, the reality is forgotten and the revision becomes the truth. According to an ABC Poll only 19% of Americans know Iraq had nothing to do with 9-11 nor were any of the hijackers Iraqi. That means over 75% of Americans have bought into the confusion and taken it as fact.

This is the power of cognitive dissonance: to revise history, change facts and make fiction truth and the truth treason. Both history and current politics include a wealth of examples. Because of the emotions involved, the Middle East presents the perfect case study in the use of public relations to create cognitive dissonance through emotional blackmail on multiple cultures, populations and countries.

Example: 80% of Americans believe the Christian and Muslim Palestinians attacked Israel and this why the Occupied Territories are a problem. The opposite is true, as documented by the 1967 six day war, and more than 80 UN sanctions against Israel (compared to Iraq's less than 20)

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and numerous news stories published around the world. But the misinformation, through the omission of corrections becomes fact. Stories are routinely run in the US with one headline then corrected internationally a few days later. The correction, if it runs in the US and in most cases it doesn't, it is buried in the back pages with a small headline.

One example occurred on November 19, 2002, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IMFA) re-manufactured a story about a Palestinian suicide bombing on a military target. Twelve Israeli soldiers and paramilitary fighting men were killed. No civilians were killed.

The facts given in the US called the raid a "Massacre of innocent (Israeli) civilians". Internationally the story was corrected to state that this was in fact a military attack with no civilian casualties. In the US, through omission of critical facts the American public continues to believe this was yet another attack on innocents. This form of propaganda is emotional blackmail. It uses a combination of guilt and fear to generate anger and manipulate a population toward compliance. It is also very shrewd public relations, which is brilliantly planned and executed.

All stories pertaining to Israeli military activity and the Occupied Territories go through two censors, their military and IMFA before they are allowed to be reported on. This insures that only news favorable to the agenda is printed, broadcast and distributed in the United States. Internationally additional footage is smuggled out of the country and reported on elsewhere. In the US, we rarely see uncensored stories.

In reality the majority of the suicide bombings have occurred in locations frequented by military personnel and have targeted military personnel. Rather than use troop transports, the Israeli government uses public transportation, mixing civilians with military to dissuade attacks on military troops. This is why so many buses are attacked. These facts are kept at bay in the US through public ridicule of opposing positions and the vilification of dissention. Reporters are afraid to write the real story lest they become the target. Even when direct evidence exists proving the story wrong, the corrections often do not run.

How can misinformation happen in a country with a free press? *How*, is a classic illustration of emotional blackmail at work. This scenario happens with politicians, public figures and others, but is most common in the news media. Here's how it works.

A reporter writes a story, which unearths the truth or exposes a cover-up. If this story fits the agenda, he is labeled a hero. If this story exposes information that is unflattering to the agenda, he is labeled anti-patriotic, fanatical or anti-American. If the information reflects poorly on Israeli policy or shows the conditions of occupation, false flag operations or cover-ups, he is branded anti-Semitic and anti-Israel and no longer considered part of the team. The reporter is reassigned and in many cases his career is ended. He is terrorized into submission through emotional blackmail and professional reprisals. In most cases the labels are not justified. Unfortunately for the reporter, truth doesn't matter. The labels are so emotionally charged that few will question them and most won't defend the reporter for fear of the same consequences.

The threat of being branded as such and the personal loss of career is enough to ignore the tenants of *Edward R Morrow* and sacrifice the ethics code of the *Associated Press* by and following the party line. This is how a country with a free press perpetuates misinformation and goes from

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being the voice of the people and purveyor of truth to the mouthpiece of political agendas here and abroad.

Fear rules. The truth is the first casualty and the following articles omit the information contrary to the agenda. Soon this dry cleaned version becomes the accepted truth, minus the facts that reveal the full story. It's in these omissions the information critical to a sound decision exists. Through ignorance, stories create complacency. Through complacency, acceptance and by way of false information, omissions and actual lies policy and public opinion are nurtured.

Emotional blackmail plays upon the emotions we are most motivated by: Fear, Guilt, Curiosity and Humor. Threats, name-calling, vilification and public humiliation are often used to squash opposition. Repetition of the objectives continues louder to drown out resistance until through unrelenting repetition; compliance becomes the path of least resistance in ending the assault. The result is similar to Chinese water torture. A single drop of water dropping on the forehead over and over and over again until this simple occurrence causes near insanity. Emotional blackmail's repetition of tactics and messages works the same way to produce the desired state of compliance. It is in this state of compliance manifested within cognitive dissonance that people are most vulnerable to manipulation and suggestion.

The Middle East is chosen for this article because its impact is current on all our lives and it is the most encompassing example of national cognitive dissonance and emotional blackmail. It's also the most misreported and misrepresented topic of the past 80 years. Other topics fall into this category. The free e-book Censored America uncovers many of these and makes for fascinating, if somewhat terrifying reading.

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