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Hitler, Hegemony, and the Social Media Goons: Is Public Opinion Manufactured?

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A B S T R A C T

Public opinion- the measure of what the general public thinks about a particular issue- is just hearsay. What is public opinion when the public themselves have no means to resist the manipulation going on? Propaganda plays an important role here- from shameless acts like creating polarisation, communal tensions, the list goes on to include temple politics, politics of religious infrastructure, creation of a common enemy- everything appealing not to the intellect of the public, but their conscience, beliefs, value systems, and faith. Here, public opinion is drastically reduced to the position of 'elite opinion', imposed on the public through various means. This paper attempts to study the means through which public opinion is manufactured and manipulated, focusing on our central thesis- public opinion is just elite opinion.

Keywords: public opinion, manipulation, social media manipulation, BJP, Hitler, Hegemony, polarisation, Democratic Peace Theory, Hindutva.

1. Introduction

The entire paper is divided into six sections, each focusing on different aspects of public opinion and innovative ways of manipulation. Each chapter is supplemented by a chapter summary and key points to give the reader an idea of its content.

The first section deals with how Hitler managed to manipulate public opinion. Any person of a sound mind will never support Hitler, yet, Germans adored Hitler. We attempted to figure out the reason behind the same, through citing Aristotle's three modes of persuasion- ethos, pathos, and logos. We explained how Hitler managed to wipe out logos and attempted to appeal to the emotions of the Germans rather than their intellect. The role of propaganda, pseudoscience, and myth of a common enemy is also dealt with in brief. The role of all these factors helped Hitler in manipulating public opinion in his favour.

The second section deals with the ways through which public opinion was manipulated in America, especially during wartime. Democratic Peace Theory by Immanuel Kant suggests that wars are born in the minds of governments and not of the people. People will never support the war, and hence, war is the last resort for a democratic nation. However, people in America supported wars, especially the Iraqi invasion and war on Afghanistan. So, is Kant wrong, or is public opinion manipulated here? We attempted to figure out the ways through which public opinion was manipulated in favour of the war through war movies, war culture, war toys, creating a sense of insecurity among Americans, television, novels, and the terrorism industry.

The third section analyses the concept of Hegemony, with reference to Gramsci, in manipulating public opinion. With ideas, ideologies, narratives, beliefs, value systems, etc. in line with the interests of the dominant (political) class, public opinion is just an adorable fantasy. Moreover, the chapter examines Luke's third dimension of power, i.e., ideological power, in shaping and reshaping public opinion.

The fourth section comes to present-day India. It examines how religion, polarisation, temple politics, politics of infrastructure, attacks against minorities, hate speeches, etc. are shaping public opinion. The powerful ideology of Hindutva acts as the welding fire used to manipulate public opinion. With a magic wand of cow protection and religious appeals, the chapter tries to explain how the ruling party is manipulating public opinion. Rather than building on theories as in the earlier sections, this section attempts to trace manipulative forces through analysing real-time data.

The fifth section is entirely data-oriented, trying to explain how social media is becoming the face of present-day manipulation of public opinion. The reports of various surveys and study reports are analysed side-by-side, along with a survey we conducted. Various reports point to the existence of cyber goons, with an agenda to spread misinformation. More dangerously, these groups track the social media activities of individuals and try to manipulate them based on it. With lack of enough social media literacy and ignorance of crucial concepts like filter bubbles, pushes the individual into a data pit

where even they won't realise that they are manipulated.

Finally, the sixth section is a data analysis of the survey we conducted to determine the level of social media literacy among the users. As expected, the results of the survey were pathetic. The ignorance of the trends of social media manipulation has reached a dangerous level that the majority of the respondents even failed to distinguish between political ads and propaganda.

2. Why Germany Adored Hitler: Ways of Manipulating Public Opinion

The power of emotions (pathos) is unprecedented. While true public opinion can emerge only when people can think rationally, with the minimum possible information present before them to make a rational choice (logos). However, the interplay of authority (ethos) and pathos stifle the very concept of public opinion. This chapter examines the role of Hitler in using ethos and pathos as his right and left hand to spread propaganda and manipulate the hearts and minds of the Germans. Though his name itself is nothing less than a swear word today, back then, Germans adored Hitler, thanks to the murder of logos.

2.1. Key Points

1. According to Aristotle, there are three modes of persuasion- ethos (authority), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic).
2. Despite his tyrannic nature, Germans adored Hitler.
3. Dictators kill logic and play with emotions and use authority to manipulate public opinion and remain in power.
4. To kill logos, millions of books were burnt- comparable with the present government removing lessons on democracy, popular movements, secularism, etc. from the school curriculum (classes 9-12) in the guise of reducing the burden on students due to the pandemic.
5. Despite terrible infrastructure growth, lack of development, unemployment crisis, hyperinflation, etc., Hitler managed to woo Germans and remain in power- just like how BJP won elections in four out of five states despite corruption, administrative apathy, inflation, unemployment, poverty, etc. While Hitler presented himself as Christ himself, who incarnated to save Germany, Modi is often referred to as the 'ruler of Hindu hearts'. Emotions play a crucial role here in manipulating public opinion, rather than sheer cold logic, which is often bitter.
6. Hitler propagated pseudoscience like research papers claiming that Aryan blood is superior to that of the Jews. Similar fake news and pseudoscientific claims can be seen in social media where Ancient Hindu culture is glorified, in most cases, without any scientific evidence.
7. Godi media, newspapers, radios, etc. played a significant role in manipulating public opinion, just as the media of today. For instance, when Yogi Adityanath commented that UP is the best state in India, even better than Kerala in terms of health and development, the media just amplified the content with his hollow claims as to the headlines. Any person who does not follow the news regularly will only skim through the subheads and believe that it is true.
8. Spreading propaganda is intrinsic to Hitler's rule. Since that time, he couldn't employ cyber goons or cyber troops for manipulating people through social media, he distributed radios for free, through which manipulative content was disseminated.
9. Banning any form of political dissent, especially in Universities, helped Hitler maintain his authority. Parallelly, today, academicians and researchers are targeted by Hindutva groups and social media troops.
10. Fear- the most sought-after emotion by tyrants for manipulation. By creating fear among Germans of a common enemy- Jews- Hitler tried to cement his popular base. Jews were held responsible for the loss of Germany and the concomitant collapse of the German economy. Similar witch-hunting can be seen now, where minorities, especially Muslims, are portrayed as invaders and enemies. One of the best examples would be the hate speech melee and claims of 'corona jihad' after the Tablighi Jamaat incident.

2.2. Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Three modes of persuasion were articulated by Aristotle in his first volume of Rhetoric. These technical pistes, i.e., means of persuasion are ethos, pathos and logos. These are different ways in which an addresser addresses the audience and makes them think and act in sync with what the addressor wants.

Ethos is the mode of appeal which seeks persuasion through the character of the speaker. Persuader has to appear to be worthy of credence. The appeal should be from the position of authority. Employers employ only if they are persuaded enough of the capability and authority of the job seeker through the curriculum vitae. Curriculum vitae force employers to believe in the ability and trustworthiness of the job seeker even though this may not be the case. The government of a country possesses ethos on account of being elected through elections and hence, gets obedience of the people or its laws being implemented.

Pathos is persuasion through the emotions of the audience. This rhetoric appeals to the emotional state, beliefs and values of the people. Persuaders create sympathy for their cause and aim at a particular judgement by the people because whenever people come across a speaker or writer who arouses emotions or a kind of emotion, people's judgement gets impacted. Emotions are so unmanageable on part of humans that Aristotle writes emotions are "those things due to which people, by changing, differ in their judgements". TATA salt company appeals to the emotions of people when advertising as "desh ka namak" to enjoin the feeling of nationalism with sodium chloride or common salt.

Logos is the means of persuasion which seeks to appeal through the argument. It is the only probative persuasion device. Logos appeals to reason and logic. Before jumping to a conclusion, it offers rational constructive arguments. It brings in facts, figures, data, common truth and common sense to persuade the audience to believe the claim.

2.3. Hitler: Manipulating Public Opinion

Van Emeren and Grootendorst argue that ethos is exercised when "means other than argumentation" are employed, pathos, when "argumentation not relating to the original standpoint" is used to defend the claim and finally logos is employed when "argumentation genuinely relate to the disputed standpoint".

Anyone being hostile, discriminatory, violent, dictatorial, inhuman is given the nomenclature of 'Hitler'. The reason behind this name becoming the metaphor for such bad qualities is known to everyone. We all recognize his activities and ideology as being blot in world history undoubtedly. Yet, Hitler was a very famous leader or dictator of his time in Germany. German people adored him because he exercised pathos and ethos to persuade and brainwash the people of Germany.

For coming in power and most importantly to maintain a powerful position, dictators use pathos and ethos. They play with the emotions of people and exercise authority. Talking of data, facts, figures and economic conditions or logos will not help any dictator to grab or remain in power. They think of their power and how to increase it. Thinking rationally, people choose people-centric leaders, not dictators.

Adolf Hitler did the same ever since joining politics. He killed logos, relied on pathos and ethos to make German people dance to his tune. Books are the highest abode of logos, therefore, he started to ban books critical to him or Nazi Party in the name of them being 'un-German' or 'anti-national'. As atrocities got more worsen, bonfire events were organised by Nazi officials to burn books in heaps. These books included books on the subject of Marxism, democracy, psychology, liberalism, books written by Jewish people, and foreigners. In the dictatorship of Hitler, these bonfire events were common and regular. More than 25,000 books were burnt by Nazi officials on 10th May 1933, the year when Hitler came into power with a one-third majority. Nazi Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels justified by saying that " the future German man will not be just a man of books [logos] but of character [pathos]". Writings were promoted that looked down upon the logos. For example – "pure reason was all too human, and dangerous and contrary to nature when applied to real life. Blood and race lead people to the power of nature, the spirit that flows from these sources, and which cannot mislead".

By 1933 the unemployment rate was 35% and inflation was rampant in the whole of Germany. The promise of employment earned a mass of voters in the elections of 1933. Irrespective of public works projects initiated by the Nazi government like canals and highway construction to reduce the unemployment rate, it took so many years to bring at a stable level only. However, Hitler used pathos to take people away from the main cause. For example, "I've never said restoring Germany would take just a few days. Again and again, I've made it clear: the German nation will be restored only when the German people find their inner strength once more".

Pseudoscience was largely prevalent in Nazi rule to keep people far far away from logos. Dubious research papers were published and promoted spreading the propaganda of Germans (Aryans) being of a superior race and pureblood while other human races being inferior or sub-human category which included Jews. Another example of pseudoscience which Hitler himself promoted is "world Ice theory" given by Austrian so-called inventor HannsHorbiger. He claimed in the theory that the whole universe including the moon, planets except earth is made of ice. He was also given an honorary doctorate by the Nazi government.

Proponents of logos like historians, professors, scientists were oppressed by the Nazi government. Universities and colleges were tightly controlled by the Nazi party. Professors of top universities were appointed by the Nazi party. Moreover, there was a strict gauge and control of the Nazi party on the subjects to curb anything being taught critical of Nazi ideology and to further propagate the ideology. If not conformed to Nazism, professors were terminated. Hence, there were very few who dared to speak.

Albert Einstein had always criticized Hitler's party. After Hitler came into power, He resigned from the Prussian Academy of sciences in Berlin as a mark of protest. He left the country and German citizenship too for having no equality in Germany. His logical criticism of Nazism proved almost fatal to him. Puppet (godi) media defamed him in every way deemed possible with baseless news against him. His research papers were burnt by Nazi officials. Caricatures were drawn of him with a nose like a Jew's. Some newspapers claimed that Einstein was plotting a conspiracy against the country with the collaboration of communists. Joseph Goebbels, Nazi propaganda minister had printed a photo of Einstein with the words "not yet hanged". Because of life threats, he ran to Belgium and England ultimately where he lived in a rural area with English bodyguards guarding him all the time.

Nazi party exercised pathos almost everywhere. To ensure an uninterrupted supply of soldiers to the German army and to have more people with so-called pure blood, traditional German values for women were introduced which included modesty, dedication to Nazified Christianity, Nazified values and production of children. A civil award like the German Mother's cross was given to those women who bore at least four children.

Before coming to power and since its inception, the Nazi party talked on two main topics- nationalism and anti-Semitism (anti-Jewish). Appealing to these emotions (pathos) helped in getting a position of authority or winning elections (ethos). Similarly, to portray himself as a messiah – Savior from evil Jews and poverty, Hitler invoked religion (pathos). In his biography 'Adolf Hitler: Sein Leben und Seine Reden' (later it was found out that he had written himself and had published with his friend's name), Hitler compared himself with Jesus Christ and that he would save Germany.

In 1925, Hitler wrote his autobiography by the name of 'Mein Kampf' (my struggle). He wrote this autobiography when he was in jail on the charge of treason because he tried a coup. He wrote outright lies in the book that was proved later. He claimed himself to come from a poor family and had done physical labour because of poverty to appeal to people's emotions and gain sympathy. "I am grateful that I was thrown into a world of misery and poverty and thus came to know the people for whom I was afterwards to fight." (Hitler, Mein Kampf).

How an irrational and pathos-driven agenda was expanded? The curriculum of schools was designed in a way to encourage discrimination and discourage racial mixing. Richard Evans writes in 'The Third Reich in power'- "teachers and pupils greet each other at the beginning and end of every lesson with the Nazi salute. The pupils listen to major political speeches on the radio in the school hall". All strategies were applied to ensure Nazism conformist non- rational future citizens and soldiers.

State-sponsored program of the Positive Christianity movement was initiated to unite Germany's all protestant churches with a national church. This network was created to legitimize and support the Nazi agenda. The media was also biased either due to pressure or intimidation or bribery with the money which the Nazi party got from corporates. The media played a significant role in portraying him as a messiah. Therefore, German people had no sources to know reality but just biased media sources. Moreover, under the direction of propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, millions of inexpensive radios were distributed to spread the agenda.

Hitler established his de jure ethos in 1933 when he got one-third of the majority and formed the government. He had been trying since 1923 but failed. He tried a coup in 1923 for which he was sentenced to five years for the crime of treason. Because of his de jure ethos, he conducted many atrocities. After coming to power, the Nazi government-orchestrated 'Kristallnacht' or 'crystal night' in which thousands of businesses of Jews, their, homes, synagogues were burned or vandalized and owners were beaten, arrested. By 1941, the remaining German Jewish population were imprisoned in concentration camps. Under the Nazi's Eugenics program, state-appointed physicians were authorized and instructed to euthanize children that were considered by Nazis to be 'Untermenschen' (sub-human). Between 1939 to 1941, one lakh Germans which included twenty thousand children were euthanized.

For de facto ethos, Nazis created fake enemies of Germany that did not exist in reality, i.e., jews. Fear was created among Germans for the fake enemy. Conspiracy theories and dubious news were created and spread to prove their fake hypothesis. Jews were held responsible for the defeat of Germany in world war I by the Nazis. One lakh Jewish military personnel had served in the German army in world war I and around 12,000 were martyred on the battlefield.

Jews were also held responsible for the crashing economy. When the Nazi party supported socialism or spoke of it, Jews were blamed for capitalism and hoarding all the money. Interestingly, when the Nazi party started practising crony- capitalism and hence started taking funds from corporates, then also Jews were to be blamed for communism this time.

Germans believed in these conspiracy theories or fell to the pathos and ethos of Hitler because they were unhappy with the defeat and had believed for Germany to win. The economy was low at that time with widespread poverty and unemployment. In the 1930s elections, the "Hitler movement" was written on ballot cards instead of the party name, i.e., the Nazi party. Ultimately, Hitler was Germany and Germany was Hitler. Being anti-Hitler was equivalent to being anti-national or anti-Germany.

3. Exploring Manipulation of Public Opinion: Why did Americans Support the War?

According to Democratic Peace Theory, propounded by Immanuel Kant, democracies are less likely to go to war with each other. The fundamental assumption behind this theory is that since democracy is ruled by the people, a war requires public approval, which is impossible, according to Kant. Kant believes that public opinion will never support the war. However, if we take a look at the US, especially on the Iraqi war and the Afghanistan war, people supported it. Is it that the theory failed, or because public opinion got manipulated?

3.1. Key Points

1. People will never favour war. However, people in the US supported the Iraqi invasion and war on Afghanistan.
2. 53% of Americans were in favour of deploying ground forces in Iraq to dethrone Saddam Hussein.
3. 87% of Americans were happy with the way Bush handled the situation.
4. 92% of Americans were satisfied with the American Progress in Afghanistan (December 2001)
5. Novels, comics, war films exacerbated American fears post 9/11
6. Public opinion manipulated by the "terrorism industry"

3.2. Democratic Peace Theory

The Democratic Peace Theory states that liberal democracies are less likely to go to war than those with other forms of government. People opine wars to be highly undesirable or irrational and they get to decide only in democracies. The largest proponent of the theory is German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

In his 1795 manuscript 'Perpetual Peace', Kant asserts that republics would be less likely to go to war. The rationale he presents for democracies not going to war is the public opinion of the self-governing citizens. He, therefore, writes "if the consent of the citizens is required to decide that war should be declared, nothing is more natural that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war". Those calamities, according to Kant, include the possibility of citizens being sent off to fight in the war, of having to bear the cost of the wars through taxes, dealing with the devastation brought by war and other issues.

As in a republic or a democracy public opinion influences the decision making on whether or not to go to war, leaders of democratic countries are not likely to support the war. Even if they try to embark on a war, the institutional features of the structure of liberal democracies leave them red taped. Finally, if leaders of democratic countries choose war against public opinion to not, people would likely punish their elected leaders for decisions that led the country into unnecessary wars. Therefore, citizens of democratic countries do not hold a public opinion of going to war, whichever the case may be.

Further, Kant claims that in a non-democratic system or country where political decisions are not congruent to the public opinion of the citizens, a declaration of war is the easiest thing in the world to decide upon because war does not require the ruler sacrificing anything.

Similarly, the American Revolutionary leader Thomas Paine believed that kings would go to war out of a misplaced sense of pride where republics would not. And on the same note, Alexis de Tocqueville concluded in his book 'Democracy in America' that democracies were less likely to engage in war. Among civilized nations warlike passions become rarer and less active as social conditions get nearer to equality.

3.3. Manipulating American Public Opinion: The Iraqi war and the Afghan War

Democratic peace theory does not hold true with American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The assumption of the theory, i.e., public opinion is against the war, got manipulated.

Here, we are mostly applying public opinion trend data, briefly illustrating the dynamic by assessing the public reaction in the United States on the military operation of America. With a war against Iraq, Americans backed President Bush. According to CNN/USA, conducted October 3-6, 2002, 53% of Americans said that they favour invading Iraq with U.S. ground troops in an attempt to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

Americans were very supportive of capturing and killing Osama Bin-laden. The public has given all government officials of the USA a very positive rating for how they are handling the war on terrorism. A poll shows 87% people approved for Bush and 82% approved for Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld.

And in the case of the Afghanistan invasion, people were still supportive of the government. In a December 14-16 Gallup poll, the vast majority of Americans, i.e., 92%, expressed satisfaction with the amount of progress made by the U.S. military in the war in Afghanistan. Of the 92%, 69% opined that they were "very satisfied".

In toto, the public was supporting the government for the military invasions done by America. This is way more contrary to the Democratic peace theory by Immanuel Kant which says that democracies don't go to war as people won't like fighting.

This is explained by Lustick, in his analysis of the US "war on terror". He argues that the novels, films and television shows in the United States increased the fear of terrorism and the need for a "war on terror" to make the country safe following the 9/11 attacks.

Many argue that the public fears about international terrorism are manipulated by members of "the terrorism industry"—the media, businesses with relevant commercial products to sell, "experts" seeking the spotlight, and politicians trying to gain leadership credentials. For instance, following September 11, the Bush administration successfully framed the attacks as terrorist acts, while the 1994 attacks on World Trade Centre was treated as criminal actions. Once they were framed this way, the government actions were considered appropriate by the (manipulated) public, including going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq and altering civil liberties and privacy rights.

4. Public Opinion, Hegemony, and Ideology

Ideology is another potent tool to control, regulate, and manipulate public opinion. According to Gramsci, the dominant ideology of any period reflects the interests of the ruling class. Though he meant capitalists, it can be seen as the ruling political class. Currently, Hindutva ideology is often used to manipulate public opinion, which we will deal with in chapter IV. Ideological power is so strong that religious polarisation and temple construction overshadows bread-and-butter issues.

4.1. Key Points

1. The imposition of a common culture, to which everyone must adhere, is governed by ideological considerations. For instance, a Minister in the Karnataka Cabinet said, "Whether you like it or not, all the Christians and Muslims in India, too, will become (part of the) RSS soon".
2. Ideologies, culture, and values become the 'commonsense'. And those who criticize commonsense will be a fool. Dissent is critical to uncover the reality, and curbing dissent with the power of hegemony, will only lead to propagation of a perceived notion- with no alternatives and scope for rational thinking- which are essential to forming a rational public opinion.
3. Hegemonic principles can be widely observed in what we call today authoritarian democracies. India too falls in this category. The prevalent notion of Hindutva, anti-minority sentiments, cow protection, etc., which outmanoeuvres inflation, unemployment, and energy crisis, can be analysed from a hegemonic perspective. Here, hegemony dictates public opinion through manufacturing consent.
4. Steven Luke's third dimension of power- power is used by the ruling class over the ruled, without any explicit use of force, violence, or coercion- such that even they fail to realise that their minds are being hacked, defeating the very essence of public opinion.

4.2. Gramsci, Hegemony, and Public Opinion

The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's concept of Ideological Hegemony denotes that the dominant ideology of society reflects the beliefs and interests of the ruling class. Gramsci maintained that the propagation of ideologies—beliefs, assumptions, and values—through social institutions such as schools, churches, courts, and the media, among others, achieves agreement to the dominant group's control. These institutions are in charge of socialising people into the dominant social group's norms, values, and beliefs. As a result, the group in charge of these institutions has complete power over the rest of society.

Ideological hegemony is most visible when those who are governed by the dominant group believe that their society's economic and social conditions are natural and inevitable, rather than the result of those who have a vested interest, in particular, social, economic, and political regimes.

Hegemony, to Gramsci, is the group's "culture, ethics and ideology" over subaltern groups. This leadership, however, is not limited to superstructure because it also needs the economy, and is based on the work of a group that is at the forefront of economic activity. It is based on the balance between consent and coercion. Gramsci first noted that in Europe, the dominant class, the capitalist class, ruled with the consent of the lower classes. The capitalists were selfish because they defended certain interests of the subaltern classes to gain support. The function of the proletariat was to conquer capitalist leadership and become self-governing. Gramsci believed that the leading role of the dominant class must include ideology and consciousness, that is, the superstructure.

The location of cultural, ideological, and intellectual variables as fundamental for the proletariat in its struggle to become a leading class is Gramsci's main contribution to Marxist theory. Gramsci proposes that to achieve a hegemonic position, the proletariat must ally with other social groups struggling for the future interests of socialist society, like the peasantry. The idea was to establish a new historical bloc and a new collective will of the subaltern classes. People are brainwashed during socialisation through subtle interactions in their daily activities. He accused the church, education, and social life of giving capitalism spontaneity. He projected capitalism as natural and gave it legitimacy. He lamented that communism could not be introduced unless it became the dominant ideology. He proposed the creation of anti-hegemony by working-class intellectuals. He demanded an alliance of the organic class.

Hegemony works both on a grand scale and even in the more mundane, day-to-day elements of our lives. In particular, we saw the cumulative effect of this system of combined coercion and consent, namely to shore up the social and political order for the benefit of a privileged minority. The bourgeoisie develops a hegemonic culture using ideology rather than violence, economic force, coercion. This hegemonic culture propagates its values and norms so that they become the "commonsense" values of all.

By this, people will accept capitalist ideas and act according to what they want without their knowledge.

Gramsci realised that there was more to capitalism's ascendancy than its class structure and worker exploitation. Gramsci underlined the capacity of ideology to perpetuate the social structure through institutions like religion and education in his essay "The Intellectuals", written between 1929 and 1935. He claimed that society's intellectuals, who are generally considered as detached observers of social life, are members of a privileged social class with high status. As such, they serve as the ruling class's "deputies", instructing and encouraging individuals to adhere to the ruling class's norms and standards.

The common people are not aware of the values and norms they keep are not theirs, so they are willingly accepting the dominance by the 'Ideological Hegemony', allowing themselves to be manipulated by hollow grand narratives. So, where is the public opinion here?

4.3. Ideological Power

Ideological power is also somewhat similar to Steven Lukes Third dimension of power. It exists where people are subject to domination and acquiesces in that domination. The intentional stance allows us to predict and explain others' behaviour in ways that those agents may not recognise. It denies agents privileged access to their reasons for actions.

Lukes' scholarly beliefs are given in his book, Power: A Radical View, as the "three faces of power". Power is said to be exercised in three ways, according to this theory:

1. Decision-making power
2. Non-decision-making power
3. Ideological power.

Ideological power derives from an individual's or a group's ability to form norms of action, or, in effect, rules concerning how individuals should act toward one another within a community; or it may originate from the ability to shape the character of ritual or aesthetic practices within society. In this, Lukes conveys how one's ideas, beliefs, actions will be influenced without any force or cohesion, defeating the very idea of public opinion.

By examining both theories (Ideological hegemony & Ideological power) we get to know that the elite/capitalist class are exploiting the commons for the continuity of their domination. Even they are making a great impact in their commonsensical views and norms. So, the capitalist interest is imposed on them and they are willingly carrying it out. How should it affect public opinion? It is visible that they don't have their views, norms, and ideas, they are bound to carry the ideology of the dominant class without their knowledge. The ideologies of the dominant group have the power to make those ideas commonsensical or natural to the dominated group. Therefore here, Hegemony is merely consent; it has to have domination.

There is no 'public opinion' but some elite opinions injected into the veins of the public, more importantly, without their knowledge. We can arrive at this statement by those theories.

"Hegemonies have a complex relationship with democracies. Hegemony represents the continuing battle between democratisation—the expansion of democracy—and elite efforts to keep the radical aspects of democracy limited. Thus, the coexistence of democracy and hegemony, though consisting of tension is not extraordinary. Most democracies often experience this coexistence and the tensions involved in it. In the case of India, the emerging

hegemony also holds the possibility of altering the nature of India's democracy as it was imagined and at least partially practised so far. In this sense, the emerging hegemony portends a distortion of democracy" (Palshikar, 2017).

5. Manipulating Public Opinion in India: The Role of Religion, Polarisation, and Communal Divisions

Hindutva is, unfortunately, the pathos, the fear of terror (20% Muslims pose a significant threat to 80% Hindus), and the hegemony of the ruling government. This section analyses how BJP uses Hindutva to manipulate public opinion by creating polarisation, promoting ethnonationalism, linking religion and infrastructure. To explain polarisation, attacks on minorities, especially Muslims, are studied followed by independent analysis on Muslim (under)representation.

5.1. Key Points

1. Ethos- the idea of Hindutva, mixing of religion and nationality, creating polarisation, politics of infrastructure.
2. Pathos- the central figure of Modi as Hindu Samrat
3. Religious polarisation- Ram Mandir, anti-beef protests, vigilante groups, mob lynching
4. The use of communally divisive language saw a 500% increase (in 2014-18, compared to pre-2014) by elected leaders, especially the members of the BJP/ RSS.
5. Temple inaugurations and the politics of infrastructure to woo Hindu voters.
6. The grand narrative/ dominant ideology/ hegemonic concept of Hindutva eclipses every other concern- price rise, unemployment, lack of development- and make people vote in the name of religion and a national identity linked to religion, thereby manipulating public opinion.
7. Pew Survey- 64% Hindus believe that only a Hindu can be a true Indian. 60% believe that a true Hindu (as well as a true Indian) shall vote for the BJP- where is public opinion? It's just manipulation in the name of temples, religion, polarisation, hate speech, and violence.

5.2. Manipulation of Public Opinion in the Present-Day India

In stark contrast to the splendid stupor of a secular India, either based on Gandhi's tolerance and the principle of sarva dharma sama bhava and Vasudeva Kutumbakam or Nehru's separation of religion from politics, Hindutva believes in a dominant grand narrative- an Indian (Hindu) identity- that minorities shall espouse, arrogate and assimilate themselves. In his magnum opus 'Hindutva: Who is a Hindu', Sarvakar challenged the secular notion of the Indian State.

Ninety-nine years later, self-styled Hindutvavaadis now have a central figure- Prime Minister Narendra Modi- an unapologetic, fierce, and unforgiving Hindu Nationalist, the Hindu Samrat - which we believe, is the reason behind the spectacular success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the ballot-box, rather than the interplay of rational choice and public opinion- in that sense, collective (rational) will or aggregation of (rational) individual interests.

Rather than one's application of mind- or logos, as discussed elsewhere, vox populi fall victim to the ethos of the colossal central figure, and the pathos of manipulation through:

a) Ethnonationalism- Intermixing of ethnicity, nation, and nationality
b) Intense religious polarization- the need for creating a common rival to unify the rest
c) Politics of ethnic infrastructure- mixing of religion, development, and infrastructure

After the landslide victory of the BJP in 2014, the zeal of ethnonationalism got an unprecedented boost- with even calls to amend the constitution and redefine India as a Hindu nation.

Religious polarization was also at its peak, especially since the 2019 elections, with the BJP resurfacing its intent to erect Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. Moreover, the opposition was hammered to be soft to Pakistan and guilty of treason.

Ever since BJP assumed power, self-styled vigilante groups and majoritarian mobs started attacking minorities, especially Muslims and Dalits, activists, and Human Rights defenders. "Acche din" will come, but with a non-inclusive nation, where any form of dissent or criticism will be deemed to be a threat to national unity.

Rather than an "inclusive India", where the "last person in the streets" can reap the benefits of development and taste the candied harvest of a welfare state, the current government is more focused on perfecting a "united India", with dissent and scholarly critique cannot cross the Gateway of India (Atul Sood).

5.3. The Politics of Polarisation

Most hate crimes against Muslims were in the name of cow-slaughter, a sacrilegious act, according to Hindu culture. Since 2014, the country witnessed incandescent campaigns against cow slaughter and beef consumption. According to Human Rights Watch, 44 people, of which 36 (81%) were Muslims, fell victim to the horrendous mobocracy of the vigilante groups between May 2015 and December 2018. Moreover, 280 people were grievously injured in a hundred incidents across 12 states in India, during the same period. Interestingly, 90% of the victims were Dalits, Tribals, and Muslims.

Why they are behind beef? In India, beef is widely consumed by ethnic and religious minorities. According to 2015 NSSO data, 63.4 million Muslims (40% of the total Muslim population) consume beef. Also, 26.5% of Christians eat beef. Among mere 2% Hindus who consume beef, 70% are from SC/ST, corroborating the violence against Dalits and tribes by vigilante mobs. However, to appeal to a humongous electoral pool of Hindu voters, BJP leaders often make strong, yet violence-inciting statements on the need to protect cows, which adds fuel to the hitherto burning fire of communal hatred.

A survey by New Delhi television recorded a 500% increase in the use of communally divisive language by elected leaders- with over 90% of them belonging to the BJP- between 2014 and 2018 vis-à-vis the pre-BJP era. Furthermore, Hate Crime Watch studied 254 rumpus involving crimes against minorities between 2009-2018- leitmotifs were communal clashes, issues related to inter-faith marriages, cow protection, and religious conversion. They found that 91 people were killed, and 579 injured- with 62% of the victims being Muslim, and 14% Christians. More interestingly, 90% of these donnybrooks occurred after 2014- when the BJP came to power. In addition to that, 66% of the crimes were reported in BJP-ruled states. "The obvious impunity for the string of crimes that have taken place, and their hugely shameful valorization by some leaders, is distinctly a strong factor in their continuation", according to Maja Daruwala, Senior Advisor to Commonwealth Human Rights. One of the cabinet ministers of the Modi government even festooned the convicted vigilantes for the murder of a Muslim coal trader with honorific garlands.

Finally, temple inaugurations are becoming mere political spectacles, whose cascading effects we will explain in the coming paragraphs. From a symbolic dip in the Ganges after inaugurating the $45 million Kashi-Viswanath corridor to the Shilanyaas ceremony of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, everything appeals to the sentiments of Hindu voters- especially urban Hindus. Why urban Hindus? "Urbanization has transformed Hinduism more than

any other development. In the village, you live together. You can't miss the muezzin or the bells of the temple and you have syncretic cults… When you go to the city that's over" (Cristopher Jafferlot). This mixing of religion and infrastructure has, to a great extent, manipulated the public opinion in favour of the ruling party- the face of Hindutva. Gillis Verniers, Professor in Political Science of Ashoka University commented, "Now that they [BJP] had won Ayodhya, they will need another battle"- another battle to sustain themselves, define their existence, and replenish their relevance- "which sites are they going to fix their eyes on next?" Is it Mathura?

After 2014, the minorities, especially Muslims are underrepresented in India. Firstly, the major political parties are shying away from incorporating Muslim views and representing their interests. Secondly, out of the 303 MPs of the BJP, none of them is Muslim. Thirdly, the Hindutva stir is so fierce and reinforcing that Congress had to adopt a soft form of Hindutva for their campaigns. For instance, Rahul Gandhi visited a string of temples prelude to the 2019 elections. This extreme ideology is facilitating the uniting of sentiments against minorities- especially Muslims- just like what Hitler did to unify Aryans against the Jews, who were brought to the spotlight as a communis hostis.

5.4. Hindutva, Polarisation, Temple Politics, and Public Opinion

How will all these affect public opinion? Ghanshyam Singh might have an answer for this. The pro-poor stance of Congress failed to garner popular vote, eclipsed by the grand narrative of Hindutva. It hardly matters whether the government failed to tame inflation or not, create more jobs or not, brought reforms in health and education or not. What matters is that the "BJP stands for the Hindus and will build a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya", according to a voter surveyed by The Hindu.

Coming to the recent elections, the anger against the government- price rise, unprecedented rise in fuel prices, corruption, local issues, unemployment, and lack of development- were swayed by propaganda and polarisation. The impotence of the government to tame inflation and create more jobs were effectively trumped by the larger narrative of Hindutva. Where is the public opinion here? It is just an extension of the opinion of the elites- what others want people to think and to act.

The ideological preponderance and dragging the opposition through mire determines the election results these days, and not the rational decisions made by individuals. Today's election results are, therefore, determined by ideologies and grand narratives, new currents and transits, which even opinion surveys and exit polls miserably fail to fathom.

Let us take two examples: Firstly, the bread-and-butter issues of Uttar Pradesh were effectively eclipsed by the 80-20 pitch. Without any doubt, UP is on its way to becoming the Hindutva laboratory of the BJP. Secondly, NPCC in 2019 claimed that the winning of BJP's Pragya Singh Thakur, an undertrial and a Godse practitioner, is redoubtable evidence of religious polarisation and unparalleled hatred against secularism.

A 2019 Pew Survey suggests that Hindus see their religious identity and national identity intimately interlinked. 64% of the Hindus surveyed believed that being a Hindu is a necessary prerequisite to being a true Indian. Moreover, 60% of the Hindu voters who voted in the 2019 elections believed that a true Indian shall be a Hindu, most speak Hindi and should vote for the BJP.

A dangerous trend is identified by the survey where 83% of Hindus in the central region (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh) believe that only a Hindu can be a true Indian. 65% among those also claims that a true Hindu (i.e., a true Indian) shall vote for the BJP.

Here, religious identity is closely linked with the national identity, which is again linked to the identity of a party. Where is free will here? Where is public opinion? Just wave the magic wand of propaganda, polarization, and temple-building, and inject elite opinion into the masses, disguised as public opinion. Election results are the epitome of public opinion, and where considerations above an individual's rational thinking dictate which button, they shall press on the red-letter day of elections.

6. From Face-to-Face to Facebook Goons: Analysing the Trends of Social Media Manipulation

Beyond Hitler and hegemony, social media goons are the face of present-day public opinion manipulation. With advanced AI and machine learning techniques, social media troops are analysing the social media activities of people, and strategically using them to manipulate their opinion. Furthermore, social media literacy is extremely low in India, which adds insult to injury. Most people cannot even differentiate propaganda from legal political advertisement. This dangerous trend is being capitalised on by political parties to garner public opinion in their favour.

6.1. Key Points

1. India is an active contributor to the global information order. A study report has confirmed the presence of hundreds of thousands of social media troops spreading disinformation primarily through Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter to manipulate public opinion.
2. They spread pro-government/ pro-party agenda(s), attack opposition, hammer journalists, critics and scholars, and spread communally divisive (mis)information.
3. Cambridge Analytica, an IT firm that provided data support to Trump for the 2016 elections to manipulate voters, worked extensively in India. Moreover, Silver Touch, the firm behind Modi's NaMo app, is linked to several fake Facebook accounts.
4. 70% of social media users are unaware of the concept of 'filter bubble', according to a survey.
5. A Reddit user claimed that for every propaganda account for congress, there exists 120 for BJP.
6. A study by BBC noted an unusually organised circulation of right-leaning messages in social media, hinting at the existence of goons.
7. Another survey revealed that one out of two social media users received fake news prior to the 2019 elections.
8. Most of the messages circulated before the 2019 elections used anti-minority words or hashtags (with 30% targeting Islam), and words like Pak, Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Hindu, Hindutva, Hindustan, Sri Ram, Ram Mandir, NaMo, Narendra Modi.

6.2. Propaganda, Manipulation, and Social Media Goons in India

The political parties and tech giants were always in a quid pro quo relationship. When the vote bank shifted to smartphones and AI devices, they were forced to resuscitate their propaganda strategy. From a platform for public debate and the strengthening of democracy, social media platforms are becoming the arena of manipulating public opinion by spreading misinformation and propaganda amplification.

According to a recent report by Oxford Internet Institute, India is playing a vital role in the global disinformation order. The study report is summarised as:

1. In India, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook are used to manipulate public opinion
2. Private companies, politicians, and political parties are involved in spreading misinformation
3. They use both bots and humans for this purpose
4. Data-driven strategies and targeted ads, and in extreme cases, reinforcement learning , are used to spread disinformation.

5. A plethora of groups of cyber goons exists in India, with a team strength of 50-300 people. The report also identified outsourcing/ disinformation contracts worth USD 1.4 million.

Moreover, they identified three types of misinformation/ Goebbelsian propaganda:

1. The first category of misinformation is in support of a political party/ ideology/ agenda. Here, the content is mostly pro-government or pro-party. Furthermore, an active cyber troop or cyber goons amplify the content while filling it with moral-emotional hashtags, which we will discuss in the coming paragraphs, to ensure greater organic or inorganic reach.
2. The second category of propaganda/ misinformation attacks the opposition. It is mostly state-sponsored trolling, targeting political dissent, opposition parties, and journalists.
3. Thirdly, the final category attempts to create/ deepen wedges/ divisions among various communities. It involves polarised messages to create divisions among communities and stifle the communal order.

The use of social media in manipulating public opinion, especially at the time of polls, is not something new. In 2016, Cambridge Analytica provided analytical support to Ted Cruz and Donald Trump for the election campaign, with colossal data of over 87 million Facebook profiles. For Trump's campaign, the data was used to determine Trump-supporters and dissuade Clinton voters using micro-level targeting and data analysis (Vaidyanathan, 2018). Also, they used Facebook to spread false propaganda, hammer Clinton, and impel passive Trump supporters to show up on the polling day.

Various sources confirm the presence of cyber goons in India, especially before the 2019 elections. In the age of Globalisation where we blindly provide access to everything- camera, contacts, location, microphone- the real trouble ensue when a group with a particular agenda, like political parties, gain access to it. After that, they can easily employ advanced AI and principles of reinforcement learning/ machine learning to beautifully manipulate public opinion.

Political parties are working in close association with "private firms, volunteer networks, and influencers to shape public opinion" (Bradshaw, 2019). Some even have a dedicated IT department or a propaganda department to be precise, which employ sophisticated tools, AI, and machine learning to target, tailor, refine, and constantly improve social media strategies, often about data analysis, targeted ads, and high-level automation.

Moreover, political parties in India work extensively with private firms, especially which offers data support. Cristopher Wylie noted that Cambridge Analytica "worked substantially" in India. Also, Bradshaw commented that Silver Touch, an IT firm that helped build the NaMo app worked closely with the ruling party, and has been linked to a bunch of fake Facebook accounts.

The survey conducted by us revealed that only 29.7% of social media users were aware of the concept of the filter bubble. Such disastrous ignorance of social media strategies often paves the way for loss of real choice, real thought, and real public opinion, thinking what they see is true and organic. Facebook is far from a place to network, connect, and hunt old friends, but an ideological supplement to political parties. People coming under its influence may not realize, but they are ceding their 'free will' to such shameless propagandists. For Data Scientists and leading IT companies, it's just another way to earn a mammoth profit, and for political parties, it's a way towards power, bereft of which they will put their identity and existence at stake. Finally, for the public, it becomes the coveted 'public opinion, shaped by someone working with complex algorithms and strategic data analytics, and beyond that- someone who is dreaming to permanently cement themselves to the chair they are in.

Recently, a Reddit user with the profile name '/u/onosmosis' claimed that for every one propaganda account for Congress, there exists 120 for BJP. The user backs his claims with data analysed from millions of unverified Twitter accounts to track online trends in misinformation.

Moreover, a 2018 study by BBC found that right-leaning messages are circulated in a surprisingly organised manner, which is impossible without a central command-and-control authority. These messages were anti-minority, glorifying Hindu power, taking pride in the Vedic age, and India's supremacy to the West.

A 2019 survey by Social Media Matters and Institute for Governance, Policies, and Politics divulged that 1 out of 2 social media users received some kind of false news before the 2019 elections. Most of them were circulated through Facebook and WhatsApp. Misinformation Review by Harvard Kennedy School analysed politically-motivated WhatsApp groups before the 2019 elections and found that 10% of the circulated images contained misinformation. Among those surveyed, over 41% acknowledged receiving anti-minority messages, especially hurtful comments against Muslims.

Finally, a study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America found that moral-emotional words boost the dissemination of any propagandic message by 20% for each extra word. Jonathan Haditrecognises four types of moral-emotional words:

1. Other condemning words try to instil feelings of contempt, anger, and disgust against a person, a community, or a group.
2. Self-conscious words that arose the feeling of shame, guilt, and embarrassment
3. Other-suffering words appeal to emotions like compassion and sympathy
4. Other praising words related to awe, elevation, and gratitude

A survey by The Hindu saw the use of words like Pak, Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 33% of the posts circulated between January to February 2019, just a few months before the 2019 elections. Other popular words were Hindu, Hindutva, Hindustan, Sri Ram, Ram Mandir, NaMo, Narendra Modi, etc. The report also suggests that 30% of the words targeted Islam.

With extensive goon activities in social media, the arena that was thought to strengthen individuals, empower them, and make them question, criticise, protest, and participate in a democratic framework, is becoming a breeding ground for misinformation, propaganda, religious polarisation, and manipulation. With lack of social media literacy, especially pertaining to crucial phenomena like filter walls, are just making individuals puppets in the hand of the elites who have no other agenda than securing power by hook or by crook. Being mere pawns in the larger game of social media manipulation, public opinion is just hearsay. When individuals lose control over their minds, their very ability to make decisions and think logically is compromised. Public opinion is, therefore, nothing but elite opinion imposed over the masses through various means in which one, and perhaps the most crucial one, is social media goons.

7. Propaganda vs Advertisements: Towards Social Media Literacy

A survey was conducted by our team to study social media literacy, especially with respect to the ability to identify propaganda from legal political ads. The survey form was widely circulated through Google Forms, and it was closed as soon as we received 101 responses. The survey questionnaire had three parts:

1. Part A had four general questions (attached, Annexure-A)
2. Part B had nine particular questions, with nine statements where the respondent had to identify it as a legal political ad or disinformation propaganda and place it on a scale of five. The intended scale value is as follows:
    a) normal political ad
    b) somewhat political ad, but not propaganda
    c) exaggerated political ad
    d) propaganda
    e) extreme propaganda
3. Part C also had three general questions, aimed at assessing the respondent's views on fake news and targeted advertising.

We analysed different Twitter handles and curated nine statements out of them and those were used in this survey. Names, places, references to other countries, etc. were deliberately removed or replaced with something else. In our list of nine questions, three were political ads, five were propaganda, and one was an exaggerated ad.

7.1. Data Analysis

Firstly, we received 101 responses divided into the following age bands:
1. Below 18: 1%
2. 18-40: 89.1%
3. 40-60: 6.9%
4. 60 and above: 3%

The following were identified as the most popular social media platforms amongst the respondents:
1. WhatsApp: 80.2%
2. YouTube: 76.2%
3. Facebook: 69.3%

It is to be noted that Oxford Internet Institute identifies Facebook and WhatsApp as the top platforms in India with extensive cyber troop activity. Also, the survey by Social Media Matters and Institute for Governance, Policies, and Politics revealed that most fake news is circulated through Facebook and WhatsApp.

Moreover, fake news and disinformation are taking visual turns with YouTube and Instagram becoming heavens of such goons. Firstly, visual media facilitates the circulation of quick and consumable content. Secondly, it is difficult to analyse words inside visual medium for the authorities to arrest communally divisive posts, deep fakes, defamatory trolling, and disinformation. Thirdly, content circulated in visual media has enormous potential to go viral.

Moreover, only 29.7% of the respondents were aware of the concept of the filter bubble. This level of ignorance is unacceptable, where they might not even realise that they are being manipulated. Also, only 28.7% of the respondents said that they could identify propaganda from political ads.

Out of the five propaganda statements, there was the only one that was identified by more than 50% of the respondents. The other four statements were identified by less than 50% of the respondents. This dangerous level of social media illiteracy will only lead to effective manipulation of public opinion.

Propaganda statements	% Users who identified the same as propaganda
In the last five years, when we were out of power, there has been many incidents of cow slaughter, which is a direct assault on our faith. Vote us to power and we will end it.	36.6%
When Delhi was under the control of the Mughals, it was deteriorating like anything. When it was under the Marathas, it flourished like anything. Which one will you choose- Mughals or Marathas? Vote for us and stifle the invaders!	47.5%
There is no place for beef in Hindustan. Cows are our mothers! How could you witness an outsider slaughtering it?! Give us a chance and we will exile them.	55.5%
If we lose power, anytime we can be under attack. Z has deployed missiles with nuclear warheads along the border. Give us power, and only we can stifle them.	31.7%
Why are you voting for that womaniser? He is waiting to sit on that chair to assault our women. Give us your vote, and we will uphold the faith and dignity of our household.	32.7%

28.7% of the respondents believe that it is likely that the data of their social media activities can be capitalised on by political parties to manipulate their opinion. This figure is comparable to the 29.7% of the respondents who were aware of the concept of the filter bubble. Only if one understands the concept of the filter bubble and targeted advertisements, can one realise the vulnerability of the data of their social media activities. Therefore, it indirectly reinforces the accuracy of the survey.

Only 19% of the respondents said that they are not likely to receive fake political news, provided they could identify them. With a large group of people failing to recognise propaganda from political ads, this figure can be more pathetic in reality.

Out of the fake news the respondents usually receive or received, the content of the top three are:
a) Assaults on minorities
b) Attacks on opposition
c) Attacks on critics, journalists, academicians, scholars and film-makers

8. Conclusions

To sum up, each chapter of this paper tried to substantiate the central thesis- there exists no public opinion. What exists is the elite opinion, carefully framed, manipulated, and disguised as public opinion. The first chapter analysed how Hitler used various tactics to manipulate public opinion. In the second chapter, the ways through which the US citizens were manipulated to support the war, especially the Iraqi invasion and Afghanistan war, were analysed. Moreover, the third chapter dealt with the theory of hegemony and the third-dimensional view of power, and how it is used to manipulate public opinion. In addition to that, the fourth chapter dealt with the role of religious appeal, temple politics, Hindutva politics, religious polarisation, etc., in shaping public opinion. The fifth chapter extensively dealt with the issue of manipulation of public opinion through social media. Finally, the sixth chapter, comprising of the data analysis of the survey we have conducted, showed the grim reality of social media literacy among respondents. Just like how a goldfish living in a bowl is unaware of the world beyond it, people get wooed by the shameless acts of elites to manipulate public opinion. The question is still daunting- does public opinion exist?

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